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CREEPING RAILS

By Arthur Stringer

I

THROUGH the open windows, where the long silk curtains stirred and swayed in the breeze, Charlotte Cranfill could hear the impatient pound and clatter of hoofs on the asphalt. It was Davis, the groom, she surmised, waiting with the horses.

Then the burr and drone of an automobile crept up to her out of the morning quietness of the Avenue below. It stopped under her windows, a door closed sharply, and then the burr and drone began again, and died away into space.

That, she knew, was her husband, off for the morning. The odor of burnt gasoline sifted in through the curtains. It was odious, like some odious incense to an equally odious god of unrest. From where Charlotte lay on her bank of pillows she reached out an impatient arm and swung back from her bed the heavy, pivoted shelf-tray. The movement was an outward symbol of her inner feeling; it took on the nature of a ritual unconsciously performed. For on the bed-tray still stood the remains of her too abundant breakfast, an unlovely confusion, now, of what had grown cold and sordid and repugnant to her. From childhood, she suddenly remembered, she had always pushed her plate away when she had finished; it was a habit of which no one had been able to break her.

But if only all of life's unlovely and exhausted things, she vaguely wished, could be swung as easily away! And for the second time her hesitating

fingers took up the letter which she had saved out from her morning's mail.

Marcelle, her maid, tapped and entered noiselessly. In one hand she carried a tall vase of gray silver, from which branched a cluster of Bourbon roses. Over her other arm hung a bottle-green riding-skirt.

"Davis is here, madame, with the horses."

The young woman on the bank of damask had already run her blunt gold dagger along the edge of the envelope, and was unfolding the bulky pages of the letter. She looked up with unseeing eyes, her thoughts far away; the maid repeated the message.

"Then tell Davis to wait, please," answered Charlotte abstractedly, as she smoothed out the pages on her indolently up-drawn knees, and then began to read her letter, word by word and page by page, with what seemed a predetermined care and deliberation.

She paused only once, to fling back the two heavy braids of brown-gold hair that hung over her shoulder and partly shadowed her intent face. Then the grave, gray eyes, that seemed almost a violet blue under the low-arched brow and the even darker, thickly-planted lashes, went on with their reading. If, from time to time, the finely curved lines of the almost too red mouth were touched from their abundant youthful buoyancy into a betrayal of half-disdainful and half-embittered revolt, the woman's studious and wistfully unhappy face gave no other sign of her inward feeling.

"My darling child," ran the letter, in an angular precision of script and

line which, to the reading woman, seemed incongruously old-world and exacting and unbending, "my darling child, I could scarcely tell you, I think, how your letter startled and grieved me. We, my dear Charlotte, 'who are old and wise and gray,' have all gone through these fires which you think so new and strange and terribly your own. I want you to remember this, from the first. For I can see that you feel your predicament is something startlingly new and unparalleled. My child, it is as old as the ages. And out of my own life and experience I want to warn you—before it is too late. We plain old women of the world, we misunderstood old dowagers, whose most tragic battle seems a struggle against obesity and wrinkles—all of us still chew the cud of some old love. Because it's encysted in fat now you mustn't imagine the old blind arrowhead didn't once sear. I mean that, after all, it's the ashes of some great love and sorrow that make the grayness of our gray old heads. And if we don't still *feel* and *know*, we can at least still remember. And thinking over your problem, dear Charlotte, I would still plead with you to stand to the last ditch. I do not speak of a mere worldly wisdom. Keep up appearances, at least. Act out your part; grin and bear it, I mean, until you can stand it no longer, for your own name's sake. *That's* where we women suffer so much. A good many things have changed since I was a girl, but tongues are just as bitter and tears are just as salty as they were thirty years ago.

"As you know, I opposed this marriage of yours from the first. If you had been only a great, wild, headstrong, wilful girl, it would not have seemed so bad. But you were more than this. You were not only rebellious and reckless and unrestrained, impatient of every bond and tie, but you were, as well, a young and fresh, beautiful-bodied and imaginative-souled woman, the sort of woman that passion *has* to flutter about and break its wings on. Yet you wanted to be the Hunter,

you, with that mad, emotional, insatiable soul-thirst of yours. But, as I say, you were a lovely woman, and that made you the Hunted. Men clustered around you, and followed you, and wheedled you, and flattered you, as they will every lovely girl; and more than one of them thought that all these fine audacities of mind of yours, which I think *you* took for some great courage of soul, were only a sort of loose-jointedness of thought and life. Some of them probably still think so.

"I always felt, when your mother pleaded with me, toward the last, to bend round with her and think better of this crazy match of yours with poor Stephen—for every weak man ought to have our pity—I always felt that she knew she would be leaving you soon. I think she longed to see you more stable—to be tied down and restrained. Feeling this way, she thought she was leaving Stephen safely hitched to you there, to ride at your heels like a drag-anchor in a storm, and through his very stolidity to keep you from drifting too, too far. She knew, dear, that you needed ballast. She scarcely realized, though, that you were your father's daughter. You can't remember him as I do. (He was the best loved of all my brothers, for all his heat of blood and what it cost.) But in you, so often, dear girl, I have seen him speak and act and live. The same impetuosity, the same riot of mood and energy and impulse, the same big hunger for the joy of living—I could see that you had all these things to fight against, to keep down. Even before your marriage I knew that a passably bad man was always a poor brake on the wheels of a passionate girl's life.

"I saw you swing down into your box at the Empire last Thursday night—your frugal old auntie was in an orchestra chair with the Lindsay-Dewars—I watched you in your Gainsborough and your white Venetian, with that chin of yours in the air and those lips of yours so disdainfully curled, and I said to myself, 'There is a girl who is

going to feel the whip of life before she's bridle-wise! There is a young lady, I take it, who is either going to bolt or be broken!' For, my dear Lady Disdain, I could see through all your little play-acting of indifference. You will say it was odd, but at the moment I remembered how you always insisted, when you were a tot, on throwing your olive-stones on the floor! And even now, after your growing-pains are all over and forgotten, you insist on making mistakes—none of them, I know, has been the one final and fatal mistake—and you have refused to see where you were wrong. You have been stubborn and hard-headed, you have set this sad old city agog with some of the mad things you have done, you have fought your mad little fight for freedom—and now that the chain begins to chafe and pinch you begin to cry out that you are the only woman who has suffered and declare that you'll have your liberty, whatever it costs, as though this sort of thing, my dear, were to be found by chasing it across country at breakneck speed in a Mercedes touring-car, instead of fusing it out in your own quiet little cambric-covered furnace of suffering!

"One thing you have, of course; and that in the end may save you much. I mean your good American sense of humor, which will be able to laugh and shatter the tragedy out of many a threatening moment. You are at least not one of those soft women, with the tears oozing out at the first sprinkling of sentimentality, like the juices out of a pineapple sprinkled with sugar.

"But what troubles and grieves me most, dear girl, is what you tell me about Stephen's brutality. That, as you say, is the most terrible part of it all. To strike a woman—oh, it is unspeakable! But to strike a woman before a servant—I can't write of it, dear. You did right to discharge that second butler. But husbands, my child, are not to be shifted off with an hour's notice and a handsome tip! Whether Stephen was drunk or not makes little difference. Even the halo

of jealous rage can't beautify brutality like this. But then again, you see, it was doubly unfortunate that you should have this ridiculous and even dangerous music fellow, Dorat, playing Chopin to you alone in the moonlight. And when, at heart, you don't know a jot about music—when you only wanted to be lapped, if I'm not greatly mistaken, by some gentle little tide of emotionalism, to wash the everyday dust off. But there, I don't want to be the Devil's Advocate for anybody. I only want to open your eyes and make you see things. And when you get as old as I am, my dear Charlotte, you will be more humble, and perhaps ask less of the world, and, above all things, *less of men!*

"As I say, to have a hungry-eyed and long-haired musician playing Chopin to one's wife in the moonlight is not a soothing nightcap for any half-drunk husband. Then Stephen always was primary and rudimentary and kind of semi-barbaric, under all his Union Club veneer. I suppose he had heard as much as I have about this artful and much-advertised pianoplayer fellow from Paris. I *hate* these platform *poseurs!* You heard 'Lohengrin' with him Monday night. You motored to Cedarhurst and back with him Tuesday afternoon. You and he tried your best to founder your two biggest horses, in the Park, most of Wednesday. All this, mark you, you did not tell me of in your letter. But you see I know it, just as everybody in our set knows it.

"What you did yesterday, and what you are to do today, I don't know, as yet, but in time it will all be duly made note of and passed on and announced.

"Now, my dear child, if you *are* going to take the bit in your teeth and bolt, for good and all, never pick out a scatterpated Frenchman for a running-mate. I'm worldly-wise enough to know that! In the first place, I firmly suspect this Jean Dorat to be a good deal of an adventuring *poseur*, traveling on his face and seven inches of rusty red hair. If he is a big man, why doesn't he do his work in a big

way? Why doesn't he take to the auditorium, where he belongs, like Ysaye, and Paderewski, and black little freckled Kubelik, instead of posing at pink teas and doing the shaded-window studio nonsense? I heard him at one of those drawing-room recitals of his, and watched a pack of emotional *matinée-girls* crowd round him and coo about their Over-Souls, and all that sort of marshmallowy rubbish. I even saw one of them produce a pair of scissors and when he was busy dilating on Music and The Infinite, deliberately cut a button off his sainted coat-tails—to sigh over in secret for a blissful three weeks. If I am wrong, and he *isn't* a charlatan, then for heaven's sake *do* steer clear of him. If he is an artist, I mean, it is foolishness to give or concede him anything. For the greater he really is, the more selfishly and dispassionately he will bend and warp everything round to his Art. I know them, my dear. Peace and home and women and love—they toss them all into the jaws of that ravenous monster they toil and die for. They'd break your heart, just to nocturnize placidly on what they'd call your delicious semi-tones of grief. They *have* to be selfish—and women who love them find it out, always, a little too late. No, not a Chopinite, my dear! It would be as silly as that old threat of yours about running off to go on the stage, where you'd vamoose in a week. For the stage, my dear, as we know it nowadays, is good-bye brains and long-live body! When *our* sort of people mix up in it they're invariably stupid and vain; when the *other* sort do they do it for one of two grim things: to fall or to climb.

"I would never stop to take this thing seriously, only I have several reasons for suspecting that Dorat himself is trying to give some color of sincerity to his feeling. All New York knows of his attitudinizing over your Salon portrait last Spring. Of course, my dear, it is always flattering and sometimes disconcerting to have a genius fall in love with one's picture,

and even dedicate a sonata to it. But when it's not a supremely *good* sonata it might all look a little *outré*, especially to jealous-minded husbands. And you, my dear, were made strictly for home consumption!

"I often wonder, Charlotte, if you fully realize just how far you have defied the conventions. And have you stopped to think whether or not you can keep it up? Or have you considered where it leads to, and what is the end of it all? Are you going to make this young life of yours like that old room of yours, at home, that poor old room I used to look over and laugh at, for there you were, writ down with all your moods and fads and caprices; with all your comically-tragic variable temperament—Chinese lacquer-work higgledy-piggledy with Tuscan vases, and Daghestan tapestry next to Navajo blankets, a dusty music-stand cheek-by-jowl with a forgotten easel, a portfolio of bad poetry hobnobbing with a set of book-binder's tools, and Mexican drawn-work buried under a mess of modeling clay. This passion for change, this unrest and waywardness, we can always overlook in the mere play of life. But in the deeper currents of love and duty, my child, it leads to bitterness and utter defeat. As I told you years ago, it's not more life you want, it's more Light. You have not the stoic and self-fortifying soul of a social derelict; you could never be a maverick on the range of respectability. There is none of the Hindu pariah about you. You are a girl of warmth and fire; you have to have friendship, companionship, perfect understanding. You are big-hearted and quick-teared; you are luxury-loving—through habit more than through temperament—and you are Love-loving.

"You have been saying to yourself, I know, that you want to live your own life. But it is only we 'who are old and wise and gray,' dear Charlotte, who learn that, after all, the fiercest slavery can and does lie in excess of liberty. Beyond the sea-line of every new view there always lies another

golden island for us to sigh after, beyond the frontier of each new passion there stretches another strange land to tempt and call us. You have asked too much of life. You want everything absolute, when, after all, existence is made up of compromises. You are like the old Irish volunteer your Uncle Gregory used to tell about, who kept insisting the whole blissid rigimint was out av stip wid him . . .

For this reason, and for many others, I say cling to your wreck until you utterly have to abandon it—cling to it until the last bitter moment. Put up with Stephen to the uttermost; I mean if you can—and heaven be thanked you have your own home and your own money. Busy yourself, above all things. I'd rather see you tubbing a baby than scraping a palette—but take the palette if it's the best you can get! Take up your painting again; wiser persons than I have said you could do something at it, if you only tried. The deeper moral side of it all, the commands of our church, you see, I have not touched on—for I know you are still too much of a pagan, in your heart of hearts, to give an ear to what I might say. Some day you will understand.

"Think these things over, and write and tell me how you feel about them. I have been used to giving you advice, dear Charlotte, from the day you first flooded the bath-room and painted the tom-cat with strawberry juice, right down to the time you indignantly packed up to march off alone to the Continent. But none of it, I think, was more needed than it is now. So forgive me, dear child, for flinging such a letter at you. It is only because I love you so much, because we all love you and hope and pray for your happiness."

Then followed the signature, in the old-world, angular handwriting, "Your fond and affectionate, Aunt Agatha."

The woman on the bank of pillows slowly folded the letter, sat with wide and studious eyes for many minutes, and replaced the sheets in the envelope.

Then her gaze wandered to the

bed-tray, with its disordered array of cold dishes.

All life seemed a thing of parings and husks to her, at the moment. There was nothing she looked for, there was nothing she needed, now, but escape. That, at least, in some form or another, was still open to her. Yes, she had everything, it was bitterly true—but, then, had she not surrendered everything for it?

The restive stamping of the horse-hoofs on the hard asphalt crept up to her ears.

"Marcelle," she called sharply, as her lithe young body slipped out of its sheathing linen, and the two great braided ropes of her heavy hair were caught up in an impatient hand.

"Yes, madame," answered the maid, from the doorway.

"Bring my riding-boots, and the rest of the habit," she said, fired with a sudden hunger to get out into the open and think it all out, from the first to the last.

II

"MY DEAR AUNT AGATHA," wrote Charlotte Cranfill, in answer to the letter which had caused her a morning of hard riding and an afternoon of much unrest and troubled thought, "your letter made me truly happy, and truly miserable. Nothing sudden and terrible is going to take place. I am not trembling on the brink of some great abyss—and that is the worst of it all! I will just go round and round like a pin-wheel, I suppose, until I burn out. Everything will drag dully on and on and on, as it has done now for nearly two years, and it will all be mean and small and sordid. I feel now, as you once told me, that life today doesn't have so many Great Moments as it used to. It was all flashing and fine, once, when the man drew out his sword, and, heigho! made history and faced destiny in a moment's action. Now, instead of drawing out swords, our lawyers draw up briefs, and some cumbersome machinery is set in motion, and things

drag on and on, and there is neither movement nor climax to it all.

"That is just what I feel is killing me. I, too, must still have something barbaric and primal about me. I want action. I hate the dull suspense and the gray evenness of these things. I tell you, Aunt Agatha, *I want to live!* I want to do something. I have got to get out of myself. I don't think I am one of those ultra-modern, self-opinionated Shawese women longing to reconstruct the moral world, to the popping of smart epigrams. All I want is a little love and a little tenderness and a little companionship. Day by day I seem to be getting more cramped and starved and crushed—some mornings I feel that I could scream out loud, like a crazy woman, and throw the cups and sugar-bowl at the walls. I don't mind suffering; I'm not afraid of sorrow—if only it's for something, if only it's got stir and movement and meaning to it.

"Women are not the same, Aunt Agatha. I *know* they're not! Some of them would give their eyes to have what I've got—just to have money, to upholster existence for them, and just to have teas and cotillions and that sort of vapidness, even to pad out the bony skeleton of their Tragedy. I'm growing sick and tired of it all, and I tell you seriously, Aunt Agatha, *some day I'm going to take out of life what it still owes me!* 'I'm going to have my fling,' as Stephen once put it. And speaking of Stephen, it is not so much his brutality (if only he'd not exercise it before the servants!) as it is his whining cant about affection. As I told you, he knocks me down on the stair-landing, like a German butcher, and puts a scar on my forehead that will stay with me for life, and then gets white and sick over it, and bawls like a baby in his misery, and groans that I am his wife, and that he can't help loving me, and that I am breaking his heart (just after he has done his best to break my head!). And then his mother, too, comes to me, and pleads for him, and weeps, and talks about her poor, undisciplined boy, and how

he has been spoilt from a baby, and how unhappy it is all making her.

"This is what makes it hard. It leaves me without justification. I can't trump up excuses for myself; I feel like Hamlet, when he found his uncle on his knees, praying. But something must soon be done. I don't see how things can possibly keep on and on as they have been doing. I want a change. A broken head and then a bawling husband!—even such a fine rotation of crops as this can't stop the soil of matrimony from getting worn out. And when I want a thing I want it. When I live I want to live. When I love I've got to love—everything must go with it, everything must be taken and given. You remember what Uncle Ezra used to say, 'When a New Englander goes wrong, clear the track!' It must be that way with poor papa and me—behold in us the Tragedy of the Variable Temperament!

"You will say that I have everything. That is quite true. When I get tired of the brougham I can try the victoria. When the victoria palls I can go forth in state in the motor-car, and then the spider-phaeton or the runabout, and then the next day back to the brougham again. If I don't go to the Sturtevents' I can go to the Fishs' or the Carlton-Harrisons', and if I don't like dinners I can go to dances, and if the dances are tiresome, I can go to the Metropolitan and sit up in a box (and have good music make me doubly miserable!). But what has all this got to do *with living?* If I had not rounded the familiar old circle so often—if it was my first season instead of my fifth, then I might learn to endure it.

"Oh, Aunt Agatha, often and often I wish I didn't have a dollar! I wish I were dog-poor. Then I'd get a shabby little studio in the shabbiest little corner of all Washington Square, and go hungry and be lonely and work hard—and perhaps, in the end, do something that would make me think I had broken into life. No, no; I can't try to paint either here or at Cedarhurst—the servants and the fuss, the

machinery of the life crushes it all out of me. I'd only do Nile-green poster-girls floating through atribilious marines! Not that I'm morbidly ill or unhealthy (you should have heard me singing at my bath yesterday morning!)—for I'm not. I sleep soundly and eat well, I walk and ride hard. I try to keep this 'temple of the body' firm and fresh and sane. I'm still young, as women go—in fact, there are days when I feel that all life lies before me, and I have a girlish and virginal sort of wonder as to its possibilities and its joys and sorrows.

"Do you remember, five years ago, you warned me that some day a strong man would take me in hand, and break me and tame me! I resented it then: but now I seem to *want* to be broken and tamed. Do you know the feeling, Aunt Agatha? As you say, I have always been breaking out, and causing trouble. It occurred to me, today, that I'm a good deal like poor Algie Eaton with his weak lung. He feeds and nurses himself and makes blood, until he is just so full of it, and then it bursts out again through the poor weak partition, and he goes down again, and then he starts slowly building up still more, only to break out again. I get too much blood in me, I feel, sometimes. I have no way of working it off, and so it just breaks out in caprice, and freakishness, and silliness, and I wake up and realize that I have shocked people.

"As you tell me, my dear old aunty, in your discreet way, some of them still think I am a good deal of a fool. And yet you tell me to wait, and hesitate, and see how things will come out—when you know I never could wait, and never would endure uncertainty! And yet—and yet—it is not always a man, Aunt Agatha, that breaks and tames a woman.

"You are wrong in your impressions about Jean Dorat. He is not a charlatan and *poseur*, and I am not in love with him. No, I do not love him; but I like him. He seems so alone in the world, so isolated, so in need of companionship. He drops in often, of an

afternoon and takes tea with me. But it's not me he comes for altogether. I think it's more for my hickory fire and Golden Pekoe, and of course, when I remember how he has been run after, I'm human enough to feel honored. For, notwithstanding all you say, he *is* a great artist, and even, I believe, a genius. He has not been successful, it is true, I mean not successful as a man of his gifts ought to be. He is not known as your Ysaye and Paderewski and your little freckled boy from Bohemia. That is because he has not yet had one of the big commercial managers behind him, to pound him into publicity and scatter romantic tales of his youth broadcast into the papers, to have him endorse soaps and hair vigors and nerve tonics, to have him sent out on a big concert tour and fill windows with his lithographs. But this is what *is* to happen to him, and it is to begin in a month or two. Then we shall see—what we shall see. You remember what the Comtesse Potocka said about Paderewski and his first concert?—well, I think it will be a repetition of that. But Dorat is no business manager. I had a talk, first with Steibler, and then with the two Freihams, myself, and Steibler is drawing up a contract already. Poor, impractical fellow, he brings it to me, day by day (I mean Dorat), to read over and endorse and amend—to me, who know no more about business than he does himself! But he is nervous, as flickering and flashing as a torch-flame, and he suffers terribly on the platform. This caused him to come down with a crash, two seasons ago, in Vienna—I believe they still smile over the failure, on the Continent. That is why he is now looking to America for his first real recognition, I think. And as for work—you cannot dream how hard he works. Women may come and coo around him, as you say, but this really is nothing to him. And if our own men in America are too busy making money, why should anybody object because we import our supply of Companionable Souls? Our decent

men keep their noses in a stock-ticker all day. It is only the silly boys and the imbeciles that are left for us to play with.

"You are also wrong, dear Aunt Agatha, in saying that Dorat is a Frenchman. He was really born in Canada, in the little Canton of Chambly, not far from Montreal. His father was an Irish lock-tender. His mother was a French-Canadian singing-woman (she starred for a year or two as a Polish contralto), who took him to Paris, ran away with a man there, and left her boy to starve in the top of a dirty *pension*. That is all I know about him, except that he once drove a canal-horse, as a child, at Lachine, that he worked in a piano-factory in London, as a youth, for three years, and that his life has been a terrible struggle—that he has suffered and been a great deal alone, and that when you once scratch through the Parisian varnish on him he is a tender-hearted and great-souled human being, a good bit of a baby, a little bit of a boy and a great deal of a genius.

"I don't know why I have told you all this. But I have written it, you see, and while I am at it I may as well tell you something else. Dorat is to spend a week at Cedarhurst. It was unforeseen—and of course it's doubly unfortunate—that Stephen is packing off to the Maine woods today. That will once more give people a chance to talk, as you tell me they do. That's why I want you to be there with me, for the whole week. Then we can talk things out, too.

"But things will go on in the same old way, my dear Aunt Agatha, and the humdrum of life will continue, and I will still stick to my forlorn last ditch, I suppose—for I am more of a coward than you think I am—and I'll wake up some morning and find a wrinkle and a white hair or two and talk about the What-Might-Have-Been!

"To all of this I say *perhaps*; for there are moments and moods when I grow almost desperate, when I feel that I can't surrender without one last struggle for the joy of living! Like all

young girls, I once thought love meant everything. Now I know that fluffy meringue can have a sadly heavy undercrust! There may always be, as you say, some ultimate island of illusion. Beyond the skyline there may always be some further land of hope. Yet even though we never reach it, even though we fail miserably, it seems to me that the sail ought to be worth something!

"Women are so different, Aunt Agatha! The older I grow the more I see and feel this. It is easy for some of them to be satisfied and happy. It is easy for some of them to be submerged and sacrificed and self-effaced. I suppose it is the eternal egoist in me—but I am hungry for something and don't really know what it is. But oh, I want to live! You advise me to keep on, in the hope that some day contentment will fall in my hand—that I may yet cheat life out of its happiness, just as we girls used to twist and twist at a button on a West Point boy's coat while we danced with him, until it came off and we carried it away for a hat-pin head!

"Even though, in some way, I must pay for it in the end, I want to be happy, absolutely happy, just once! Perhaps, at the last, I can save myself with some sort of moral jiu-jitsu. You once told me that when people are really happy, or really in love, they don't talk and psychologize about it! That reassures me that I haven't yet had my day, for, as you know, I have always been probing and weighing and testing. And where has it brought me? Or what has it brought me? It must be good just to close one's eyes, and let everything fall away, and drift and drift, without knowing or caring. There, Aunt Agatha, I see the hair of your righteous old head standing straight up. Your Lottie of yesterday will never do what your Charlotte of today need blush for—though I remember that this Miss Lottie was always somewhat of a shameless young wench. Writing this letter has helped me—but reading your letter has helped me still more. Remember that I love

you, that I always did, and that I shall think often and deeply over what you have said."

Then followed the signature, and a page or two of postscript, and still another and a more disconcertingly affectionate farewell. And on the foot of the last page was appended a second postscript:

"From all this smoke, dear Aunt Agatha, don't imagine that I've collapsed! I'm still serenely afloat—only, like most of the airships, I'm not dirigible!"

III

CHARLOTTE wondered, as she sat in the shimmering little dog-cart at Cedarhurst Station, just why the popular novelists had never essayed the epic of the Arriving Train. So many of the intenser moments of life, she argued with herself as she mused there with her ribboned whip aslant, came and went with the coming and going of car-wheels. So often, on narrow little station platforms, life crowded up to its most purposeful apex, to its most poignant sense of loss or gain. So often the step across some Great Divide of existence was only the step to or from a waiting train. So often, in modern life, the climacteric seconds came between the momentary stopping and the starting of a locomotive—the meetings and partings, the joys and heart-aches, the hopes and tears, the awakenings and regrets!

And as she circled out on the cinder drive crowded with tilburys and traps and grooms and touring-cars and went flashing homeward along the undulating country road, she tried to convey some shadow of the fleeting sentiment to Mrs. Shotwell, who sat at her side.

"My dear," answered her worldly-wise Aunt Agatha inappositely, studying her face, "I wish you were going on a trip, a long trip!"

"So do I—almost!" said the young married woman, who looked so like a girl in the slanting afternoon sunlight.

Then she suddenly turned to the older woman at her side. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that you ought to have a change."

"That I ought to go abroad and get so much rocky *wagon-lit* and bad hotel and olive-oil cookery and sulky *portier* that I'd get shaken out of myself? Oh, I know, Aunt Agatha; I know! Life is made so easy for a rich American girl! It always plays with the soft pedal on; it's so screened and muffled and rosy! She's petted by maids and nurses; she's pampered by grooms and coachmen; she's smiled on and run after by florists and dressmakers and jewelers; she has indulgent servants and attendants to wait on her every mood and caprice! You'd think boarding-school would waken her up a bit, but even there, when she is wealthy, and perhaps happens to be pretty, she's discreetly cajoled and wheedled and given her own way. She floats through her youth waylaid with remembering smiles—and she thinks all this is life, bare life!"

"And she finds out her mistake when she marries a man about as beautifully indulged and spoiled as herself! It seems to me, my dear, that if there were more spankings in the nursery nowadays, there would be less scandals in the divorce court!"

The younger woman laughed, and looked ahead with a careless little flick of the whip.

"You mean a parent's hand is really not so hard as Fate's?"

"One hurts, my dear—but the other usually crushes!"

Charlotte suddenly paused to ask herself, as she made her toilette for the second time that afternoon, why she should be taking such pains with herself, why she studied her own face in the cheval mirror so long, and tried three different flowers in her hair.

Then she heard the rattle of carriage wheels along the gravel driveway that curled and twisted down to the great iron gates. She looked out. Yet even as she felt a wayward flutter of her

heart a little burst of laughter broke from her lips. The brougham was a diminutive one, and Peterson, on the box, looked so wide and rotund, so ponderous and florid, that she pensively recalled what Dickie Sewall had said about her servants and dogs always growing so shamelessly fat. Peterson spoilt the turnout; there was no doubt of that. But she could no more have discharged the innocent and obese Peterson than she could have whipped away her over-fed Pommeranian.

Even Wilson, the old butler, who came to announce in his grandest manner the arrival of Monsieur Dorat, was a further proof of her irresolute will in all such things. In his *crêpe* dress-livery he always looked to her like a very wind-tossed crow, solemn and gaunt and guarded. In his morning-suit he looked like an undertaker in a lean year. And at all times he was addicted to unauthorized visits to the wine-cellar. Yet she was perversely and untowardly fond of that lean and funereal figure in solemn black. She seemed to have grown up from babyhood in its melancholy shadow—and she had a weakness for old things and old ways, she often told herself. Even now she detected a symptom of incipient intoxication in Wilson's unbending stiffness of neck, in his unusual haughtiness of manner.

She turned aside to hide her little bubble of laughter, for though Wilson would unhesitatingly make away with her sauterne and claret, she in some way felt that he would as unhesitatingly shed his poor old servile and irresponsible life-blood for her. She looked at him, where he swayed unsteadily before her.

"Tell Mr. Dorat to come to the White Room," she said.

"Thank you, madam!" said Wilson gratefully. Then he stopped, and bracing himself against a chair-back, accentuated his gratitude by a profound and most ceremonial bow. But the woman did not laugh until he had disappeared below stairs.

She waited, in her own sitting-room,

a room all white and gold and the palest of pale blues, where the long French windows opened out on a veranda muffled in wistaria, studded with Vilona palms and tubbed rhododendrons. About the great white pillars twined and clung the broad leaves of the trumpet-plant, and far out, past the soft green lawns, with their pines and oaks and copper beeches, the gray-blue stretch of the Hudson glimmered and sparkled in the afternoon sunlight. Beyond that again lay the serrated purple hamlets of the Jersey shore, and still further to the west the black shoulders of a line of hills.

Charlotte could hear the low murmur of speech, and the foreign tones of Dorat's crisply languid voice. Then she heard the sound of steps crossing the old-fashioned marble hall, dying away on the heavily carpeted staircase. She wondered if it was his youthful years in London that had given him such easy mastery of English. She recalled their laughter over his friend Meran's slip of the tongue: the grim old painter, excusing his weakness for postprandial candy, had said to them in English, "*Eh bien*, I have such a sweet-mouth!"

Charlotte wondered at the new mood of mingled lethargy and unrest that was creeping over her. For a vague shyness had stolen into the waiting woman's breast, a shyness that startled and oppressed her.

Wilson, solemnly advancing to announce the visitor, all but fell over a chair. He was on the point of solemnly begging the begilded article of furniture's pardon, when he caught his mistress's eye, and discreetly and precipitately retired.

"Wilson is drunk again," she explained, with her flashlight of a smile, as she gave her hand to her friend. Somewhere in life's purest moment, she felt, there would always dwell a little flaw.

"Am I not lucky, to find you, and in such a home!" he said, in his low, even, unmoved manner. Then he took her hand in his, and bent and kissed it.

"I hate posing!" she said, almost angrily.

"What have I done?" he demanded, in bewilderment.

"Why be so Parisian?" she heard her lips reproving him, with perfect coldness. A handshake, she felt, was sufficient.

He shook his head of russet-red hair with whimsical impatience, and looked at her, musingly, out of his unbetraying brown eyes. She remembered, guiltily, that she had once scoffingly said they were like a mastiff's.

"And why be so American?" he in turn asked.

"I allow nothing to be said against my country," she said sternly back at him. And the ice was broken and she was herself again.

"Don't you miss your Masque de Fer, Forain, Caran d'Ache, the babble and the bubble of the boulevards?" she asked him casually.

No, he was happy, he responded, if he could see her. She was going to have tea served, she told him, out on the veranda, in the open air. He held the curtain for her, with his Continental courtliness of gesture, and then came and stood beside her in the wistaria-filtered sunlight. She thought of the lad on the Lachine canal, and wondered if he acquired it, this easy theatricality of attitude, with much study.

"It is fine," he said, with his eyes on the river and the hills. "I have often wished that it could be in spots like this, and not in pens of boards and bricks, that we had to meet audiences. For instance, think of the *Lieder ohne Worte* with this background, or some of the *Caprices* in this setting! You see, it is all Mendelssohnian!"

"Yes, Mendelssohnian," she echoed, though her eviscerating American humor brought to her mind the phrase of the shoemaker to his last. She liked him best, she felt, when he did not talk music.

Then she added, "At the other side of the house I have my garden, my dear, old-fashioned garden of thyme and lavender and rosemary. They

wanted to modernize it, when we took the place, for it goes back to Colonial days. But I forbade it. Now, I suppose, it will make me think of Leipziger Strasse—Number Two, was it not?"

He looked at her, in mild bewilderment. She caught the glint of comradeship found and known, and delighted in it.

"There is so much of the garden in Mendelssohn's music, don't you think?" he asked her, more intimately.

She said only "Yes," for a maid was spreading the tea-table behind them, and she wondered if, after all, he would always seem the artist before the man to her.

"Mendelssohn's music," he went on, with his scholarly, grave abstraction, "is the music of externals, of exquisite externals. It always breathes of flowers and winds and waters, of light and color. It's butterfly music, most of it, as delicate as moth-wings, with its softness, its love, so pure and young and innocent, the love of a Cecille. When in the mood, it is enough. But there are times when this is not satisfying—times, I mean, when we want more than this."

"Why more?" she asked, with her eyes on the far line of shouldering hills.

"Because life holds another note; the music, for instance, so comprehensible, so tragic, so passionate and real, of Chopin, during and after the George Sand episode!"

She gazed at him steadily for a moment or two. During that interval of silence the wind moved softly in the tree-tops, and the leaves of the wistaria stirred languidly.

"The love that was Chopin's for the faithless Constantia, the love that inspired the second movement of the F-minor concerto (not the E-minor, as so many suppose), was very different from that George Sand love."

"Then you regard the women of the Cecille type as—as unprofitable?" she asked.

"No, no; as too divine, perhaps. See what a beautiful figure she stands

in history, this beautiful wife of Mendelssohn!"

"A trifle prettier than Daniel Sterne or George Sand!" She could not help seeing his wince.

"You learned that," retorted Dorat quickly, "along with your daily golden text in the *Sacré Cœur*! But then, see; *her* art influence was nothing compared to George Sand's!"

"Then you *do* put art before everything?"

"Yes, before everything," he answered slowly. The definitive precision of his tone stung and aroused her.

"But what can a base love do for art?" she demanded hotly.

He held up a hand reprovingly. Then he came and stood over her; she felt a resentment for some sense of mastery in his attitude.

"A base love!—there is no such thing as a base love. Love is love, and in itself excuses and uplifts everything."

"Love rooted in dishonor is not love!" she quoted back at him.

He looked at her steadily, with the sunlight on his face, and it came over her suddenly that it was more than strange that he and she, a man and a woman, should stand under the quiet leaves in the quiet Autumn afternoon, speaking so quietly of love. And it was at that juncture that she remembered to call Mrs. Shotwell.

That feeling stayed with her for the rest of the day, and through all the evening, as they talked and idled away the hours.

When he came to say good night to her he took both her hands in his own.

"I still, you see, am not an American!"

He stooped to the strong yet fragile fingers, and kissed them. And as he did so some new current of consciousness seemed to creep and tingle through Charlotte's being, for she stood there with widened eyes, looking after him as he went. They had both known much loneliness, she felt.

And that was the end of the first day.

IV

"Look; they are sea-gulls!" said Mrs. Shotwell, loitering on the terrace with Charlotte and Dorat. She pointed high over the river with her green silk parasol. "And that means bad weather!"

"What are they doing, I wonder, so far away from the sea?" mused Charlotte aloud.

"They are like love, madame, which belongs to the Deep, and yet forever seeks out the shallows!" was Dorat's answer.

The eyes of the man and the younger woman met. His speech had been made with the candor and openness of a child. There was nothing circuitous or self-conscious in his smile. But the older woman put up her parasol with a snap, and turned on her heel. And for reasons it would be hard to explain Charlotte flushed crimson, as her Aunt Agatha walked away.

During his stay at Cedarhurst Dorat had promised to practise from eight until one, each day, in the music-room. Yet on this, the first morning, he had pleaded that he was not in the mood for it. Even to try, he explained, would be a waste of time. A day of idling would get the grit of New York out of his soul. "And that song-sparrow on the copper-beech there is making better music than all of us!"

She suddenly asked him if he would come and see the stables. They were the pride and talk of the countryside, those Cedarhurst stables of hers; and she liked him best when he was farthest away from the subject of music.

"I hate horses!" he told her frankly.

"But you ride!"

He laughed a little.

"I rode for seven years, from the time I was that high!" He held his hand within a foot or two of the terrace-turf. "On my coat-of-arms, some day, I am going to put a canal horse, *rampant*!"

She felt most drawn to him when he

was most honest. She tried to picture him a sandy-headed boy among river-drivers and boatmen, as an impatient and moody fiddler at *habitant* country dances. Her efforts ended in a vague pity for what he had struggled against and endured.

So, instead of going to the stables, they spent the morning rambling about the grounds. It was bright and limpid Indian Summer weather; and side by side they wandered aimlessly about in the sunlight, careless of time and place, abandoned to the quiet and indolent dreaminess of their surroundings.

She led him to her old-fashioned garden, down the prim, narrow little paths, wistfully showing him the remnants of all her Summer roses.

Under the shadow of the old garden wall she stooped and gathered some belated lilies-of-the-valley.

"They flowered late, you see," he mourned in his childlike sincerity again, "because they had no sun."

As she stood before him in the brilliant, blinding light, hatless, with the wealth of her hair a little loosened and tumbled, like a crown awry, Dorat knew that he had never before seen a face so beautiful. At one moment it seemed the beauty of the girl, with the lithe young pulsing body, so brimming with vitality, so alert of movement, so tensely knit, so Aprilian in its freshness of tint and color. Then, at another moment, it seemed to him the fuller and maturer beauty of the woman, teeming with her more abundant warmth, mellowed into some wistful quietness, shadowy, alluring, full of muffled silences and languid movements.

She came to him, smiling quietly, and made a little spray of the flowers she had gathered.

"Let me decorate the King!" she said, as she reached up and thrust the green stems into the button-hole of his coat-lapel.

He looked at her laughing face for a moment. She had no thought of drawing away. He took her hand, and held it in his; she scarcely knew why.

They stood there, looking into each other's eyes, silently, scarcely wondering what wing, what shadow of something vast and pregnant and ominous, was hanging over them. The garden about her seemed almost Edenic in its tranquillity.

"What is it?" she asked, almost in a whisper; for she had seen the sudden change that crept into his look.

She turned her head sharply. There, midway in the prim little path, with the open gate behind him, stood Wilson, in his solemn black. To Charlotte's startled eyes he seemed the somber figure of some more sordid world and fate; he seemed to embody the darkness of all her old life.

"Luncheon is served, madame, in the dining-room!" the motionless servant in black announced, with his sepulchral solemnity.

Charlotte turned back to Dorat, and answered a silent question still in his eyes.

"Afraid?" she laughed. "I'm afraid of nothing!" Then she took a deep breath and added: "Except myself!"

He turned to her impulsively, but some challenging steel-like chill in her gaze drove him back on himself. He wondered if it was the misjudgment of a spying servant that could so inflame her pride.

They went in together, silently, and the intruding note of discord hung over them all luncheon-time. It was not until they were in the music-room, and Dorat was seated at the piano, that the feeling of constraint passed away. Charlotte had asked him if all men tired of mere beauty.

"It is not beauty, when we tire of it," he answered, with his fingers on the keys. "It is the flaw in the beauty, not the beauty itself, that cannot stand the test. For instance, take this E-flat Nocturne of Chopin. It's a musical poem, a poem as sweet as any ever written. Yet, you see, you and I would now call it hackneyed. It has no concealments, no reticences. When art is plastic we have to have simplicity and clearness, but when it is

emotional it almost seems that we must muffle and veil our meaning."

"It is the unsaid that is the most beautiful, you mean?"

"Yes, just as the un-lived is the most pathetic, and the un-given the most precious!"

"The danger always seems—in giving too much!" she answered, as she crossed the room and leaned on the piano.

He was now playing a few passages of the nocturne aimlessly, and her half-bitter tone and look were lost on him.

"Yes, Brahms's greatness lies in the fact that in his later music he never gives you *all*. He limns and suggests, and leaves you to ruminate and think and fumble and labor over it. So the mystery of today's reading becomes the triumph of tomorrow's."

For the second time that day Charlotte felt that he still stood before her, more the artist than the man. He was walled and guarded and imprisoned behind his ramparts of abstraction; it would be only in his moods of the passing moment, she felt, that he would bend to worldly things.

In the afternoon Charlotte and Dorat rode together. Her orders had been that a groom should accompany them. But no grooms were available; and after one glance at the over-corpulent figure of Peterson on horse-back she laughingly ordered him back to the stables. And with Peterson's placid descent to a second luncheon below stairs there accidentally fell away from her the last link of her day of utter freedom.

She told her companion, as the two spirited horses stepped abreast into the open road that led north past hill and wood and purple ravine, of the little Italian road-house, known as the Grapevine Inn, where they might get a cup of tea before turning homeward again.

"And kept," she said gaily, "by none other than Antonio Boccaccio himself!"

"What a place for names, this new

world of yours!" cried Dorat. "I found a Chopin in Broadway. I got my watch cleaned by a Mr. Haydn, and my laundry-woman at the hotel was Madame Schumann!"

Then they broke into a canter, and Cedarhurst soon lay behind them. Dorat, obviously, rode to cover ground, and not to strike attitudes. Charlotte wondered if this man who hated horses, and mounted them only to accomplish distance, treated other less humble things in life after the same fashion. Yet she felt, as she rode, that she was riding away from reality, that all life's tangibilities were being left far behind her.

Sometimes when she led him through a hilly side-path that she knew, they had to stoop to escape the low branches of the trees. Sometimes they clattered down the noisy street of a little village; sometimes they found themselves in the silence of the autumnal woods.

"Rhapsodize on that for me, Master Musician!" she cried pantingly, after a hard gallop up a long wooded slope as she pointed with her stock at the wide line of hill and valley beneath them.

Dorat drew up and looked slowly about him, with his half-shut eyes.

"It would have to be called *Im Wald*," he said, at last. "And through it all would have to run some strain of absolute serenity, some perfect stillness. Yes, it is joy, but it is not the mad joy of Spring. It is the utter peace before Death. It is the deepest and severest calm of all consummation. All that was to be has been. The oil is low in the cruse; the word has been spoken; the page has been written; the kiss has been given and taken; the Summer is over and gone! See these opaline tints, the soft green of the hills there, and the veiling mist, that hangs like memory over a lovely woman's life. And over it all this brooding, vaulted, high American sky, as far away from us as some lost god. . . . It is love fulfilled, dying in its own arms. . . . It is satiety, completion; the song is done. . . . It is world-weariness

and life grown tired of caresses. It is death and the end. It is Autumn!"

She looked at him, in silence.

"Some day I shall make a sonata of that!" he cried through his flash of enthusiasm.

There was neither shame nor reticence in his parade of emotion. He explored and defined and tabulated feeling as other men she knew would study a horse-ring or a stock-list. It frightened her a little, this unerring probing into what seemed to her the sacred timidities of feeling, this candid uncovering of mood and impression. But through it, as through a barred window, her cramped and starved soul seemed to see some far-off light and freedom.

"You are a Latin of the Latins," she said to him. "I am an Anglo-Saxon. Have you ever thought what an ocean there is between the two races, the two temperaments!"

Dorat laughed a little.

"You are as old as Ruth, as Delilah!" his voice was rich with a sudden passionate nuance. "Your eyes cry out that you want companionship. If we have camaraderie together, you and I, there is no ocean of race, or gulf of history, or abyss of feeling, that can crowd you away from me."

She rode on, slowly, with her eyes on the valley below them, saying as she went: "Every woman wants companionship. Every life cries for its love!"

"There are many kinds of love," she heard him answer, as he followed her. "There is love without passion; there is love that is passion; but the only kind that lives and endures is the kind that binds in its trinity passion, sympathy and camaraderie."

"And that comes dear and comes seldom."

"Then why do you hate to speak of it, and turn away?"

"Because we are taught to be afraid to talk of love and feeling, as you French people do, on this side of the Atlantic. Or, if we're not afraid, we're ashamed to. It makes us uncomfortable. We would rather discuss—

well, more substantial things. Aren't you hungry?"

And off she started at her challenging gallop again, drinking in the cooling air as she went, with the wind tugging at her hair, and a reckless abandonment of joy taking possession of her at the mad heaving and rocking of her strong horse.

She drew up, laughing, as a thought came to her.

"Do you know what a woman advised me to do, when she thought I was lonely? She advised me to buy more dogs! Have you ever seen them, those pinched and disappointed women who lead dogs out on a string? Well, I have made a secret study of those women, since the efficacy of the King Charles was pointed out to me; and now I know that every woman who lavishes her affection on a poodle is invariably one of three things. She is either small-minded, or mean-spirited or broken-hearted!"

Dorat, in turn, laughed with her, though he was still a little bewildered at her sudden changes of front.

"Then who was it broke your heart?" he asked, his face a little solemn, for all the laughter about the corner of his lips.

"Thanks, for making it the best of the three!" she tried to laugh back at him. "But here I have been trying to escape to the avenues of impersonality on a poodle, and you keep dragging me back to myself."

"But you are a woman!"

"That's my misfortune, not my fault!"

"But women are the first and last thing men think about, want to talk about!"

"I wish," she cried, with a little upthrust of her arms, "I wish you foreigners could observe the proprieties of impropriety!"

She felt that she could not half-say things to him, as still again she noticed his look of unhappy bewilderment. She would have to be as honest and simple and direct with him as with a child. He had always seemed unable to follow her fluttering spirit of facetious-

ness; it left him, she felt, with a teasing sense of her insincerity; it was an injustice to him, she told herself, with his artist's hatred of ambiguities and indirections. Yet this ability to play over his head, as it were, had given her a false and misleading sense of security. There was still something to be wordlessly afraid of, she realized, in his primordial immediacy of assault, in his almost infantile directness of mind.

She no longer analyzed her own feelings, her own feebleness of defense, against each uncircuitous advance from him.

Her thoughts seemed to crush to pieces at the first touch of self-reproof, like a fallen cigar-ash between the fingers. Yet there were moments, she felt, when she either withheld too much or gave too much; for the uncertainty of innocence seemed benumbing her.

Yet, although love clung to her brokenly, like ink to a new pen, as she had laughingly said once, some answering simplicity in her own nature seemed to keep from her any corroding thought of error and sinfulness. She, too, she told herself, was pagan and primordial. When she was hungry she must eat; when she was lonely it was her right to love. Yet all her loves, she argued, had been probational, a sort of selfishness; a deliberate and cool-headed probing into vague and puzzling emotional probabilities. In all those girlish affections she had surrendered only the soft and youthful corners of her girlish mouth. Even Stephen Cranfill had once wrathfully declared, she remembered, that there was something cold and draining and vampirish about her, protesting that she was eating his soul out and giving him nothing in return. There had never been any ultimate and absolute surrender. That anesthesia which was supposed to accompany all great passions had never been hers. As she had once told her Aunt Agatha, she was in some ways still virginal.

She looked about her, as they rode on through russet-tinted hills all wooded

with oak, with the light from the lowering sun on her face and hair. She seemed, to the man at her side, a note of restless vitality in the autumnal monotone of all the world, a something that throbbed and beat against the dead grayness of the world beyond them.

They came to a by-path, thick with fallen leaves, skirting a hill from the crest of which half-hidden window-panes flamed back at the Western sunlight. Then the house was left behind and nothing but leaves and woods were about them again.

"Where does this lead to?" asked Dorat's voice, behind her, as she stooped to brush under an overhanging oak-bough.

"It opens into a road, further on," she answered. "At least I *think* it opens into a road."

Some feminine, intuitive corner of her soul seemed whispering a symbolism into the little sentence.

The path appeared to lose itself in a tangle of trees, and they both came to a full stop. A song-sparrow sang out of the stillness around them. Dorat's horse nibbled at the wayside grass-clumps.

"I'm lost!" cried Charlotte.

Dorat dismounted, and tied his horse to a scrub-oak. Then he went to Charlotte, and held his hand out for her.

"I'm lost!" she repeated forlornly, looking with childlike eyes about the hills that hemmed them in, as she slipped her foot from the stirrup and slid to the ground.

"We both are."

"Then we must go back," some protesting voice within her pleaded, as the man tied her horse with the trailing bridle-rein, and stood before her in the wooded quietness that seemed as primordial as the lives it walled in from the outside world. She refused to see any deeper meaning in his words.

Yet she took his hand, and together they pushed through the underbrush, to the top of the hill. Once more there came over her the sense of something impending, for good or evil,

of something emancipating and yet ominous.

"We must go back," she said again falteringly. It was not the voice of shrinking youth that spoke; it was the voice of unabashed yet timid womanhood that knew life and the world.

He faced her suddenly, putting his hands heavily on her shoulders.

She looked bravely back into his pallid, happily unhappy face, with its humility, its riotous hunger, its sense of loneliness, its faltering weakness, as though the flame of feeling had burned away the last drop of red manhood itself. Incongruously enough, she remembered what she had written of him: "A good deal of a boy, a little bit of a baby, and a great deal of a genius!"

"I wonder," he said quietly, with only the throaty *vibrata* of his voice to betray his inner tumult, "I wonder if this was fated?"

"What?" she demanded.

"This," he answered. "How it is or why it is I don't know. But something in my very soul has always cried out for you, and followed you, and been unhappy without you. It is madness, I know, but I love you! I love you!"

She struggled for a moment against something that seemed engulfing her like a rising tide. She wondered why these words could make her neither happy nor unhappy. Above all, she wondered why she should pity him, and not herself. She wondered if she was at heart the coward she felt herself to be, if it was fear that was forever to denude and delimit life for her, when all her days she had cried out for something wider and better. Then a baffling sense of loss, of resentment against him, of indeterminate betrayal at his hands, swept through her.

"You are not kind to me!" she cried, almost angrily.

She regretted the words, the moment she had spoken, stabbed by the look of pain that leaped into his face.

"Oh, weren't we happy enough—before?" she asked, torturing her gauntlets between her nervous fingers.

"Yes, it was happiness, in a way," he admitted. "But you know it was too

much or too little. It meant that we were cheating ourselves, deceiving everything that was honest in our hearts!"

The conviction came to her, in a flash, that the man before her was as much without a moral sense as a child. It was neither audacity nor courage in him. He would not and could not look on life as she had looked on it. She wondered still again if it was cowardice that was holding her to the hard and narrow path she had followed from girlhood. She still had to cling to something, she warned herself. She was like a worshiper who still must go to the temple, although her false gods had fallen, although she knew it was mockery still to kneel at their altars. Yet, when those dim and mysterious rites had once meant so much to her, even the hollow ritual held its sway over her, in the very face of each fallen and futile god. Yes, she had been a coward from the first. She had shrunk back and subjugated her own personality for years, now; she had kept silent and endured outrages that had broken her pride. She had temporized and vacillated; and now she was paying for it.

And it was remembering these things that she burst out with a sudden defiant: "But I am happy! I have been happy!"

She almost hated him for the look of pity that crept into his eyes. But he did not draw back an inch at her little movement.

"Listen to me! I am not blind. I can see, I have seen, all along, what your life has been!"

It suddenly appalled her, to think that her posture of years had been openly comprehended. *He* understood; the whole world understood!

"Oh, Dorat!" she wailed, swept to and fro on a sudden great tide of homelessness, of friendlessness. She half raised her arms, and dropped them again. Then she looked at him with clearer and more meditative eyes. The shock that the day had brought to her seemed, of a sudden, to clarify all life.

"But can't you see it would only be misery, for you—for me?"

Her voice trailed off into a little tremolo of wistfulness that was almost a sigh.

"I will take that misery, gladly—I will take your share and mine, if it only brings me *you*!"

"But you can't take mine!" she mourned.

"Are you afraid of me or yourself?" he asked.

"Of myself!" she answered. "No, not of myself, but of some waiting and watching part of myself, that tells me I'll suffer if I do wrong."

"But it will not be wrong! It *must* not be wrong!"

"But even to speak as we do is wrong!"

"No, no; life has its right of speech. If we cannot speak we can never be free!"

"Then why not wait, and work, and some day when I may be free, perhaps, come and tell me this?"

"Because I want help," he said humbly. "I am afraid of loneliness!"

Her arms would have gone out to him in that moment of nurturing passion, only the old engulfing flood seemed rising inch by inch about her. She seemed imprisoned behind walls that were built of dead ancestors. She was afraid of herself. She felt the tool in some hand infinitely stronger than her own will and reason. She felt weak and broken and helpless. It came to her with only a sense of languid release when she realized that Dorat had taken her hand and was holding it.

She seemed not all buoyant life and vitality now, but all fragility, all blossomy whiteness, all transient frailty—something to be watched and cherished and guarded, Dorat felt, as that shaking hand lay in his. He looked into the drooping face, now as pale as his own.

A shiver ran through the body that had seemed so lithe and buoyant. The shadowy eyes looked up at him with some half-hopeless appeal.

"Oh, where is my strength?" she

asked, as she moved to draw away from him.

"Where is your heart?" he pleaded.

"Oh, do you know what this means?" she whispered, with a little sob that was almost a moan of vague apprehension.

"If it is truth it can never mean harm!"

He drew closer to her. He could feel the warmth of her breath, the beat of the pulse through her imprisoned hand.

It maddened her to think that something was fusing and burning away her very spirit of revulsion. She wondered why she could no longer hate herself for her weakness.

Her only feeling was one of dizzy helplessness, of being torn and flung and eddied out on some grim tide that seemed bearing her beyond everything that was tangible and real in life.

"Oh, I can't help it, I can't help it!" she cried, through a sudden burst of tears. And some propulsion, vague, yet pitiless, some power not herself, moved her toward him, compelled her to draw his face down to hers and peer into it with wide and unhappy eyes.

At last! It had come at last, she tried to tell her bewildered heart, as she fell away from him, and mopped the hot tears from her face, and gazed at the ghost-like hills and trees about her. This thing she had mocked at had come to her at last, had come in this tangled and tearful and foreboding guise, when she was free neither to take nor to give it.

Yet the very unhappiness which would walk with her because of it, she told herself wistfully, might still purge away the accidental wickedness in it all. Even out of the ruins in which all her youth seemed to lie entombed she could build some house of final happiness. But there was much to be gone through, and much to be suffered, she felt, before the sorry scheme of things could be put right.

All this she tried to tell him, in her hesitating and broken way, as they rode home through the gathering twilight, side by side. He listened quietly,

but listened more to the tremulous softness of her voice than to the meaning of the words themselves.

Yet anything that she might wish or say, he felt, he would do. She could see, however, as they rode back into the world of actualities, that he seemed to shrink from facing the naked problem that lay before them as openly and relentlessly as she herself would face it.

Only once she came to a full stop, and for a minute or two of unbroken silence studied his uncomprehending face. Their older position, she felt, had been strangely reversed. He would have laughed the seriousness out of her grave eyes; but, apparently satisfied with her study, she drew over to him and flung out her hand with a little abandoned gesture of passion.

"Oh, why did you?" she cried inadequately, with that tragical smile which seemed so out of place on the soft and youthful contour of her face.

They swept in past the great stone gate-pillars, and up the darkening course of the driveway, to where the turrets of Cedarhurst stood cold and huge and impassive before them. To Charlotte it seemed like that dark and forbidding tower to which a certain Childe Roland once came and blew his horn.

And that, she remembered, was the end of the second day.

V

It was Dorat and not Charlotte who most dreaded the meeting of the following morning. She was still pale with fatigue when she came down, and although there was a shadowy unhappiness about her eyes and a nervousness about her fluttering movement of the hands, a new line of firmness seemed to deepen and mature the once girlishly soft corners of her mouth.

She had wondered, it is true, if he would think her faded and wan. But it was no time for illusion, she had rigidly determined, and had added

neither alleviating rose nor ribbon to her toilette.

Yet his sudden look of admiration, as he studied her face, brought a quick flush to her cheek, a flush which hung like a veil between him and her weariness. It was there at last, he felt, that final missing note which had been wanting in all her old-time abundant beauty, the conciliating sense of pathos, the humanizing and endearing touch of tears, for which the still unmerged poet in him sought and demanded.

What surprised him most was the frankness and directness with which she faced the situation. He himself seemed more willing to linger and loiter back among the shadows of present uncertainties; he even confessed to her that he had as yet formulated no definite plan of action, that the knowledge of a new relationship had cut him off from everything practical, that all he still asked for was the passing day and what it brought. Yet he was ready to face any obligation, go to any end, for now he could no longer think of life without her.

There were certain phases of their relationship, he knew, which were still underground and unauthorized. But they had already been made one by love, he told her with a passionate clasp of her hand across the table; everything else was accidental and irrelevant.

But, much as it cost her, Charlotte insisted on looking things more practically and more courageously in the face. As they sat down before the blazing fire in the music-room that morning she asked that they talk the thing over together, quietly, as though it were something of the household.

She told him calmly of her unhappy life, of her long impending and too often postponed separation from her husband, of the uncertainty that until then had beset her. Now, she felt, everything had been made clear and simple to her. From that day forward, whatever Dorat and his love might grow to mean for her, she could

no longer live with Stephen Cranfill. She told him, wistfully, how she regretted that the first hours of their love had been tainted with this pang of dishonesty. She had even sought out her bewildered Aunt Agatha with a vague "Oh, I need you!" until a sudden and mysterious timidity took the place of her old-time audaciousness of spirit. And she became silent again.

Dorat, himself infected with this quiet and courageous practicality in her, protested that it might be hard to remain patient, but since she asked it he would wait—wait until the end of time, and then go with her, if need be to the end of the world. They could be married, once she had secured her divorce, quietly in New York. Then they would sail for Paris. In a year or two it would be forgotten; they would be free to come and go as they liked.

"But your tour here," said Charlotte. "That must be carried through! You can't mean to cancel that?"

"Why not?" he protested. "What does all that mean to me, *now*?"

"Oh, no, no," she pleaded. "I could never let myself come between you and your work. You might not care now; but some day you would hate me for it. That is one of the reasons I have been so open and truthful. That's why I've made this talk almost a test of you—forgive me, but you know it all means so much to me! I haven't overlooked one of the sordid and unlovely details, so that we might both learn to be brave, from the very first. Oh, Dorat, can't you see? It's too late for either of us to wrap ourselves in rose-leaves and forget everything. We are no longer boy and girl; we are man and woman, and we want happiness, and life, and all that life can give us. But there are certain things we *must not* pay out for it."

"But what is work—beside *you*! All this music—it is only a sighing after something. You, *you* are the end of it, the soul of it. With you I want nothing—the last bar to happiness has been beaten down!"

She looked at him with wide and studious eyes.

"Oh, I know," she cried, with her habitual little hand-sweep of protest. "I know what it will mean. It's like what you told me about Mendelssohn, who never had adversity enough, who never suffered enough, and so never became one of the greatest. A happy people has no history; and a happy heart has no history. Oh, I know; it will be only one of two things! Either all that is best in you, all that I most love in you, will wither and die away, either you will be satisfied with today and the world, or you will find out that I have come between you and your work, and you will hate me for it. Then, because of it, you will some day let me pass out of your life."

The solemnity of this new note in her puzzled him.

"No, no, no!" he cried back. "It's only the man who can love greatly can work greatly. Why, the season of love is always the season of war—or work!" he added impetuously.

"Yes, but his work will always be the rainbow after his tempest of passing love, with the artist. He will let it go; he will even look for it and wait for it, and console himself, for all his pain and loneliness, if he has any, by saying that it's suffering that really makes him what he is. You are all artists first—and who can blame you for it?—and men only in your intermissions. That's why you have all made women suffer so much!"

"It is you, and the women who say these things with you, who make *us* suffer. There is Chopin; his life was in his music. But when George Sand killed that life she killed his music!"

"Ah, yes, and there is Tchaikovsky and Antonia Milkuyova, on the other hand, and all the misunderstanding and misery and wretchedness. Do you remember the other woman, the other woman who was as much to him as even Frau Wesendonk was to Richard Wagner? He had never even seen this other woman, this Madame Von Meck, who loved him through his music, and not through his poor,

wayward, irresponsible body. Do you remember how nobly this woman helped him, and encouraged him, how she saved him from himself and from the world? Why can't I be that woman to you, and not the other? It isn't too late yet."

"It is too late," he broke in passionately.

"Yes, it might hurt, at first, but wouldn't it be the best and the bravest thing to do?"

She turned to him, unhappily, still determinedly, pleading that he withhold that something for which her whole heart cried out. It was already too late to draw back to the old impersonal relation. Yet even as she stood enchained at the gates of love, entranced by the vistas of some wider garden, she found herself pleading with him to bar her out.

"Oh, Jean, can't you see?" she cried helplessly, unable to put into words the feeling that oppressed her.

"No, I can see nothing—nothing but you!" was his answer, as he rose and paced the wide room.

"If I had only met you two years ago!" he cried passionately. "If only that afternoon in the atelier of Carolus Duran, where I first saw and watched you, and you never knew it—if only I had taken fate in my hand, and pushed through and met you! I lost you then, through hesitation, through star-gazing! But this time I cannot and must not lose you, for all these vague fears and scruples of yours. It's too late to hesitate and question now; we are in the sweep of the current. Our fate lies on the knees of the gods. What seems to disquiet you is the thought that I'm not an idler in life, like—like—other men you know. I have my tasks to do; that's true! I have my life to work out, and I must confess that with music it is work, work, incessant work. But in all this you can be my help, my very soul of inspiration!"

"It isn't the work," she tried to explain to him; "it's the temperament. I know life isn't all love; work counts just as much in it. But if you sacri-

ficed your work for love, for me, that would mean misery. So if you sacrificed me for work, that, too, would be misery!"

She came over to him, with a self-deprecating outthrust of the arms, and caught his hand in hers, as he stood gazing at a water-color she had made during her student days in Paris. It was a little airy glimpse of a Normandy landscape, and once she had been proud of it. As her eyes followed his, and she gazed at the picture, it brought a little rush of cooling memories to her distraught mind, like a breath of fresh air to a feverish face.

"Who painted that?" he asked suddenly, as he tried to decipher the blurred initials in the corner of the picture. "Isn't it the hillside above Dives?"

"Yes," she admitted. "But don't look at it too closely. It's my own work. This large canvas is the one I'm least ashamed of. I call it 'The Woodgatherers.' Could you imagine what I tried to do there? I thought I could paint wet sunlight, woody sunshine after rain, and there it is, you see, looking as though it had been whitewashed with skimmed milk!"

"When did you do this?" There was an unlooked-for note of excitement in Dorat's voice and gesture.

"One Summer at Melun—one Summer when I had three happy weeks in Barbizon. There was a time, you know, when I used to think I could paint things!"

"It is fine! It is splendid! And it is yours!" He turned and caught her hands in both of his. "Here is the answer to all your talk. There, in that little frame, lies the end of all your fears. I felt it; I knew it from the first! You are *one* of us. You are an artist yourself. You are one of the guild; and you have nothing to fear from your own!"

She understood it only vaguely, but it filled her with a new hope and happiness. It was the beating down of the last bar of caste and prejudice. Thereafter he was to treat her as an

equal and a comrade; they were of one and the same order.

Accidental as it all was, she felt that there was something momentous in the episode. She wrung from it the last drop of timely consolation; and with that opportune balm came the end of all opposition.

The completeness of her mental surrender bewildered even herself. After all, she told herself, her soul was not a Sahara of selfishness; she was not an utter desert of apathy; it was, rather, that life had lain like a karoo, wanting only some belated rain to make it burst into bloom.

"You have tamed and broken me," she said humbly.

He led her to the open piano, and with one elbow on the polished surface of the mahogany she leaned over and watched him as he sat there at the keyboard, preluding happily. She watched the dash and flutter of the flexible, resilient, well-trained fingers with a new interest and wonder; they were the ten-throated voice through which he was revealing himself to her, and to her alone. Through them he could speak even more adroitly than with the tongue itself. Through them his soul could flower into an utterance too fine and quick for words and speech. And as she watched the magician-like hands, the sense of duality that had teased her, the feeling that the man and the artist were two distinct and opposing entities in him disappeared for all time.

"Listen; this is *you*! This is what your face says to my soul. This is what I feel when I see that wonder in your eyes!"

She listened, with her head supported on her upraised arms. He was playing Chopin now, the soft movement from the concerto where the dead master's love for his fugitive ideal, his faithless Constantia, was mirrored. Then he rambled on, and played for her, one by one, the Preludes, until the waves of music seemed to beat down the world about her and leave him and her enisled there alone

in the core of all created things. New and delicious thoughts seemed to draw a sacred veil about them. Only once, through the exquisite poetry he was pouring into her ears, did any incongruous thought creep. It was the flash, across some deep cell of memory, of a fur-coated figure in a motor-car. The mouth was coarse and grim, and the familiar red face was drunk with speed-drunkenness, as the whirring engine and its figure seemed to melt again into nothingness.

Then she was in the warm room again, alone with the man she loved, listening to the melting bars of the music he was flinging about her. She felt that she was understanding Chopin in a new light. A wordless loneliness seemed to enmuffle her, a passion for bodily companionship. Some word or chord just beyond his reach she felt would undo her utterly, would bring her weeping and shuddering at his feet.

"This," he said quietly, "is the Nocturne in G-major. Listen!"

She listened, with quickened breathing and throbbing pulses, while the double notes and the passionate middle movement with all its wonderful melody melted about her. He was torturing her, she felt; he was almost stifling her, killing her with love.

The music stopped.

"I love you!" she sobbed, groping toward him blindly.

A moment later they were in each other's arms, and as she felt his kiss on her mouth she believed that from that moment forward nothing could make her question or hesitate. It was love with her, for the first time, that forgot and that exacted nothing. She no longer looked to herself and her own happiness; it was a passion to nurture, to lavish and give and make happy that possessed her.

"Don't move!" said Dorat suddenly, as he held her. She heard his sharply indrawn breath, and wondered vaguely the meaning of it. The feeling that she had passed through the scene once before flashed through her mind. Then the sound of another voice broke in on her drowsy ears.

"Madam, for God's sake——"

Dorat held her close.

"Madam, he is here—he has seen you!"

It was Wilson, her servant, speaking to her, from the doorway.

"I must tell you, madam," he called to her, in alarm, from where he stood, "he's come!"

"Don't move!" commanded Dorat again, sternly, with his arm still about her drooping figure.

She struggled to free herself, in sudden terror, but he held her firmly. A quick step smote the marble floor of the hall.

"So you're in it, too, are you? Get out of my way, you fool, or I'll knock you down!"

"One moment, sir! Just one moment, if you please, sir!"

"Stand aside, or I'll break your head!"

Wilson, in the doorway, had tried to block his master's entrance. There was the noise of a short scuffle and the fall of an overturned chair.

"You hound! You cur! You damned hound!" rang through the room, as the husband confronted the man who had robbed him of even his empty husks of happiness.

Stephen Cranfill still wore his wet and mud-stained automobile coat of brown bearskin, his peaked motor-cap was still on his head, and the reddened face, now almost claret-color with passion, was splashed here and there with road mud. There was something Titan-like and aboriginal in his great, shaggy, towering figure. For a moment Charlotte shrank back under the shoulder of Dorat, who still stood over her, shaking a little, deathly white about the face, but clear of eye and firm of mouth.

The great, mud-stained figure in the bearskin coat advanced on the two terribly, quivering with his mounting wrath.

"You miserable, slinking street fiddler!" he cried. "You puny French cur, slinking about my house with your underhand intrigues! You——"

"Stop!" commanded the other man.

"Stop? Who'll make me stop? D'you think you'll come into my house and make love to my wife, and then have me stop, you simpering play-actor! D'you think I'll have you stand there and maul her this way, to my face! I'm going to kill you, you damned hound!"

He was tearing off his great sodden overcoat with shaking hands. Wilson, flinging down his silver crumb-knife and tray, tried to drag his master away. One bear-like blow sent the old servant sprawling on the polished floor.

The quivering woman closed her eyes and waited, she scarcely knew for what, yet she felt that now all she could do was wait.

"You're the fool!" she heard Dorat cry. "You're the fool, to think you can fight like a street loafer, for this!"

"Yes, I'll fight like a street loafer, or like a street cat, for this, you sneak! You'll get no mincing duels from me, you frog-eater!"

Charlotte saw him catch up the heavy silver crumb-knife. She saw it flash up over their heads, and heard the little cry of alarm from Wilson.

Dorat flung up his left arm, to ward the blow from his head, for his right arm was still about the woman. He caught the descending blow on the up-turned forearm, just above the wrist joint, and a little gasp of pain broke from his throat. He looked at it once, vacuously, where a red stain was already spreading over the white cuff, and then he flung the woman aside and leaped at the other man, with a throaty little inarticulate cry of fury.

They swayed and struggled and panted together, until the cowering woman, who had covered her face with her hands, groped back until she leaned flat against the wall, where she stood, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, watching, stricken into a paralysis of helplessness.

It flashed across her consciousness, ludicrously, that she was a cave woman, a creature of the flint and arrow age, and that she was being fought for, on a skin-strewn cave floor, by two disheveled and shaggy males. They were

there before her, snarling and battling for her body like two animals; and the sudden thought of the bestial and pagan coarseness of it all stung her into a panting and sickening disgust.

Her next feeling was one of pity, for her husband now held the slighter man pinned down between his knees, against the piano chair, with his huge hand on Dorat's throat, throttling him, holding his head down on the very keyboard from which the wavering nuances of Chopin had been sounded.

A sudden fury at the unfairness of it seized her, and she flung herself on the throttler with all the strength of her well-muscled young body.

"You coward!" she cried, and again the ludicrous thought of the cave woman flashed through her, as she tore at his hair and face and forced the shaggy head back on the huge shoulders till a volley of oaths burst from his lips. But still she tugged and twisted and struggled desperately, until he was compelled to relax his hold. Then Dorat, finding himself free, fell to the floor, and painfully and slowly gathered himself up. His face was bloodless, the dull gray of wood ashes. It was only his eyes that showed any life; they were distended and luminous, glowing now with a dull and lupine sort of hate.

"Oh, you fool!" he said, as he bound his still bleeding wrist with his handkerchief, while Charlotte and the footman still clung to his writhing enemy. "You fool, to think you can fight for a woman like a butcher. You have the mind of a butcher, and the soul of a butcher, or you would never have lost her, and would never have needed to fight for her!"

"Lost her? By God, man, do you mean to stand there and taunt me about that!"

He flung his captor off and made a lunge at his opponent; but for some occult reason the clenched fist which he raised refrained from striking.

"Yes, I mean to taunt you," flamed back Dorat, out of his white and inwardly consuming fury. "*I love your wife!* Do you hear me say it?—I love

your wife! And if you have a soul above that of a drunken butcher, my brave strangler of men and women, you will know what to do, and you will do it. It's what a gentleman does in such cases. You have pistols in the house, you have also——"

"Yes, by God, I have pistols in the house!"

"Then, monsieur, why delay?" demanded Dorat, with his white-lipped and half-mocking smile of fury. "It is, I believe, the only thing for the occasion. As you see, there is one too many of us. It is a matter that is easily settled." He turned to the quaking servant, who had broken down at the wild scene and was weeping audibly.

"Will you kindly fetch us monsieur's pistols, at once?"

"Wilson, get my pistols from the smoking-room mantel!" cried Stephen Cranfill, with an impatient oath of finality.

The two men stood facing each other, and the watching woman could see the animal-like hate that flashed from one face to the other. And still again the impression flashed over her that she was a cave woman, in the early childhood of the world, a she-creature of an uncouth and primordial age, and that two males of her tribe were engaged in deadly combat for possession of her. The loathsomeness, the atavistic brutishness of it, sickened and startled her.

"Wilson, you will do nothing of the kind," she called out sharply. She stood between the two combatants now, clear-eyed, with her head thrown resolutely back, quivering in her black rage.

"There will be no fighting here, sirs! There will be no fighting and killing for my love! Do you imagine I will stand and watch you battle and bellow for me like two stags? Do you imagine that I will endure this sort of mock-heroics?"

She was quivering and shaking, but she flashed a look of infinite scorn from the one to the other as she tried to school herself to be calm.

"I'm going to kill that man, or he kills me!" cried the livid husband, making a move as though to sweep her aside.

"If you kill that man, Stephen Cranfill," and she spoke now with the utmost deliberation and slowness, "if you kill that man, as surely as I breathe and stand here I shall kill you! It is too late, I tell you, for that sort of thing. Pistols and brag-gart words can't shoot these things out of life. You had a fair field; you were treated honestly; you were given your chance. *And you lost it!*"

"Lost it?" he echoed.

"Yes, lost it. From this day I have something to say about my life, and where and how I shall lead it!"

"You mean that *you* and this slinking street fiddler——"

"Yes," said the woman, "that is what I mean!"

He looked at her for one blind and bewildered moment. A foul name escaped from his now pallid lips. Then, without sign or warning, he struck her full on the face with his fist.

Dorat caught her as she fell back, and as the weight of her body came against him she locked her arms madly about him and clung to him, clung to him desperately and stubbornly, till he ceased trying to free himself.

The man who had struck the blow looked at them drunkenly, then he turned away and reeled out of the room, crying insanely as he went: "Oh, I'm sick—my God, *I'm sick!*"

They heard his steps cross the hall; they heard the outside door close behind him; a minute later they heard his voice and then the puff and whirr of his motor-car as it dashed and slewed down the winding gravel driveway.

Dorat tried to force back the arms that clung to him so passionately. A little half-articulate cry burst from his lips as he did so. For the first time the pain of his wounded wrist pierced through him.

He peered down at it, studying with terrified eyes the blood-stained handkerchief and the discolored and swollen flesh.

"What is it?" she gasped, for she saw the wordless horror that had mounted into his face.

He tore himself away, with a cry of anguish, and flung himself into the chair before the keyboard. She knew it was the opening chords of the Nocturne in G-major that he struck, but through it all she heard only his repeated little cry of anguish.

"It is the end—the end of everything!" he gasped.

She looked down vacantly, and at first did not quite understand. Then the marred and missing notes took on a meaning to her as she looked. She saw the broken and trailing left hand, and she understood.

Two of the fingers dragged lax and dead and motionless along the keys. The superficial flexors along the wrist-bone had been severed. For all time the third and fourth fingers were to be muted, lifeless, voiceless.

"It is the end—of everything," he repeated childishly, looking up at her, but not seeming to see her. Then he fell forward along the keyboard with a sullen, cacophonous crash of sound.

"Oh, my own, my beloved own!" she cried passionately, as she flung herself on him and clung to him, and bent over him, as though to shield him from some impending fate too dark for him to bear alone.

VI

CHARLOTTE, as she tossed to and fro on her white bed that night, lived over her day of horrors, hour by hour and moment by moment. Sometimes, half drowsing, she would utter a little cry and moan aloud. Toward morning she fell into a fitful sleep of sheer exhaustion. When she awoke, stifling and trembling from a dream that she was being harried and chased naked through city streets alive with malignant and merciless human faces, the sun was already high in the sky.

She lay there on her pillow, grateful for the wholesome light, for the shelter-

ing, homely realities that enmuffled her and gave tangibility to her quietening thoughts. She felt sore and bruised in body and sore and bruised in mind and heart. She struggled, wearily, to straighten things out, to excuse conditions, and to anticipate the future.

But she stood at a crossroad that bewildered her with its ever ramifying possibilities. All her older theories and tendencies of life seemed to have been uprooted; in one day her very identity seemed to have withered and died. Thoughts that seemed unworthy of her womanhood came and went through her bewildered mind. Yet she was made for loyalty, she felt; the sense of duplicity had always exacted rapacious suffering from her. She could not lend herself easily to deceit and wrongdoing.

In that, she felt, lay the bitterest sting of all. She had already asked so much of this love—this love which had now come to her ragged and torn and begrimed with its tainting earthliness. She had dreamed that it could rhapsodize away its own incompetencies. She writhed in mute but bitter protest against the blind fate that seemed to have cheated her at every turn, that had crushed her so capriciously, so undeservedly, and yet so hopelessly.

Yet love was something, she consoled herself, however enthorned the rose might come to her hand. She had always dreaded isolation. She could not altogether forsake her passionate quest of life's joyousness. Whatever befell, she would love Dorat to the last—together they would travel down the lonely watershed of life. Even to remember that he was under the same roof with her brought with it an alleviating sense of companionship, an impatient longing to see him and hear him speak. She could now only fling herself on the tides of passion, and let them carry her wherever they would. The die had been cast; the frontier had been crossed. It was now neck or nothing with them both.

She wondered, with a sudden little twinge of terror, if Dorat himself might

not in time prove unstable. She remembered how he had spoken of Pierre Loti and the forsaken Rarahu, how quietly he had explained the poor little *musma* forsaken in her Japanese garden as the fated victim of an ill-fated love; like Juliet, she had been "star-crossed" from the first. Then, when might not one of those fragile and exquisite Parisian women of his old world claim him, and carry him away from her, even as she had been carried away from Stephen?

It would kill her, she told herself; living, from the moment she lost him, would be intolerable. She even felt that she could welcome the loneliness of their impending life, of social ostracism with him, if only it was to assure her of his loyalty for the future. If they should lose their good name together, and be openly barred from the world that had known and nurtured them, she could not altogether complain. The very isolation of his future days, she felt, would leave him with only her to lean upon. Yet she knew that in the life of the artist, for reasons she could not fathom, women had always played momentous parts, either for good or for bad.

Then she remembered, with a start of mingled horror and pity, that Dorat was no longer an artist. From that day forward he could be only the dreamer with the stricken hand. His career was closed. She wondered, with a great surge of sympathy, if love could make amends for the loss; if love such as he had never known nor dreamed of could round out and complete the broken arc.

It was she who had been the cause of it all. Nothing, she told herself passionately, could now turn her from her course of self-immolation. Everything should be sacrificed in that life-long appeasement. She was no longer afraid of life and of herself.

Her train of thought was suddenly disrupted by a tap on her bedroom door. It was Marcelle, her maid, red-eyed and white-faced.

Even the servants, Charlotte remembered, must already know every-

thing. And it astonished her that no sense of self-shame came with the thought.

"It is your aunt, madam," explained the tearful maid. "She is waiting to see you!"

"Then bring my dressing-gown," said Charlotte, with widening eyes, as she saw the girl break into a torrent of tears.

"It is important, madam; you must not wait!" answered the maid, and still again the sense of something ominous crept into Charlotte's benumbed mind.

Even as she looked and wondered a second hurried tap sounded on the half-open door, and a moment later Charlotte saw her Aunt Agatha, all in black, slip into the room. She closed the door carefully behind her, and motioned Marcelle out of the room. Then she came over to the wide white bed, with its great luxurious bank of pillows.

"My darling child!" she said, with a low and quivering voice. Then she hesitated, but the mere sound of her voice had brought a gush of hot tears to the younger woman's eyes.

"Oh, Aunt Agatha, Aunt Agatha!" cried Charlotte, feeling cold and hard and alienated, for the first time, in that benignant spirit's presence.

Yet a moment later the two women were in each other's arms, and the last paling of restraint had been broken down.

"My dear, you must be brave, very brave."

"Yes, yes; I know I must."

"Then they have told you?"

"Told me? Told me what?" asked the woman on the bed, for the first time making full note of the white and weary face, and the hands that trembled a little, and the shadow of something premonitory about the kindly old eyes.

"Something has happened?" cried the girl shrilly.

"Yes, dear, something has happened! But you must be brave and strong and quiet! Will you promise me?"

"What is it this time? Oh, what is it?"

"There has been an accident, dear; a terrible accident. But is this what you call being brave?"

"Oh, I can stand it, Aunt Agatha—only tell me *what* it is. It's the suspense, the uncertainty!"

"It was Stephen, dear."

"Stephen?" she echoed.

"It happened in some way with the automobile. They found him this morning, at the foot of the Highburn Embankment. He was pinned under the machine."

"Dead?" gasped the woman, sitting up in the wide white bed.

"Yes, dear, he was dead. He had been dead from the first!"

"How did it happen?" she moaned out.

"It will never be known, dear, just how it happened, for he was alone. Whether it was the darkness, or whether it was some fault with the steering gear, or whether it was something else, something I haven't the heart to speak to you of, no one knows."

Charlotte had covered her face with her hands, bent forward until her bowed head lay between her updrawn knees. She did not cry out at first, and no tears came to her throbbing eyes. There was little response from the tired mind and body; the overwrought nerves refused to answer to this ultimate lash of fate.

"Oh, Aunt Agatha, you don't blame me?" she whispered.

"No, not you, my child—no, no; I only pity you."

"It was that something else!" moaned the woman on the bed quietly, through her effacing fingers. "It was that *something else*!"

"I understand," said the older woman, out of the silence that followed.

"And you hate and despise me?" still moaned the younger woman, out of the very ashes of her ancient fires of pride.

"No, my darling girl; I only pity you!"

VII

DURING the first gray days that followed the death of her husband Charlotte Cranfill lived and moved as in a dream. Every sense and nerve seemed deadened; she appeared to face the black actualities of the tragedy with the mild abstraction of a sleep-walker. In Mrs. Shotwell, fortunately, she found a judicious and most thoughtful emissary between the world of exigent realities and the world of shadows and silence into which her mind seemed to wander.

She felt her spirit tortured with a vague yet persistent self-reproof at the thought that she had stood so unprepared for calamity, that life had always been so softly shrouded and upholstered and draped for her, leaving her thus broken and unnerved under the chance stroke of destiny. It recalled to her one memorable day in her early childhood, when her nurse had taken her walking along the winding asphalt paths of Riverside Park. A shunting freight train had come to a stop between the parapet where she stood and the Hudson. From the slatted door of a cattle car she had suddenly caught sight of a lamb's head, and heard its little dolorous bleat. She demanded to know where captive lambs came from and where they were going. "To the butcher's, dearie, of course!" answered the unperturbed nurse. She looked at them again, sick and faint, stabbed at the thought of their doom—inexorable, predestined, irrevocable, however they swarmed or crowded or cried. They could not get away—they were going to be held and penned and killed!

She had descended in a rage, the rage of an arbitrary child, demanding their release. She had stormed and stamped and wept, begging for their innocent lives. The train had crept on. Her heart had blackened and rebelled against all life, against God Himself. For a year, indeed, she had eaten no meat. But she had never quite forgotten that lamb-bleat from the crowded car. It was her initiation

into the tragedy of existence, into the underlying brutalities of life which no appeasing emotionalism could refine away, which no barriers of studied luxury could shut out from her.

And for the second time this feeling had taken possession of her. The newspaper announcements of the motor accident had been sensational, and to the different phases of the story, as far as it could be learned, much space was given. Mrs. Shotwell had even decided that Charlotte should see none of these reports.

In this effort, however, she was defeated by Charlotte herself. That self-torturing spirit, slipping down in the early gray of the morning to the servants' quarters, had secured copies of the city papers, and once back in her own room had determinedly if shrinkingly read each line, each detail, each perversion and exaggeration of truth. She seemed to bare for and welcome each blow, with the calm ecstasy of a flagellant.

One strange assumption, and one which Mrs. Shotwell had allowed to go publicly uncontradicted, was that Dorat had been in the motor-car with Stephen Cranfill and had been found wandering about in a dazed condition by Andrew Wilson, one of the servants at Cedarhurst. The first report showed him as suffering only from bruises and a shaking-up; but on the second morning large headlines recounted how Jean Dorat, the French pianist, the greatest of the performers of the younger school, the only man who had promised to stand beside Paderewski and Bauer and Hoffmann, would never play in public again. It had been found that two of the tendons in his wrist had been broken in the accident. Although the best medical and surgical skill was being promptly employed on the case, two of the young pianist's fingers would remain practically useless. One of the papers even gave interviews with two eminent surgeons on the case, and accompanied its reports with diagrams of the injured wrist and photographs of the wrecked machine.

Dorat's old-time Paris friend, Adolphe Meran, the artist, came the day after the funeral and took his weak and shattered comrade back to the city with him. Although Dorat had asked for a word or two with Charlotte before going, Mrs. Shotwell had intervened. It was as well, Charlotte forlornly decided, though a cold fog of emptiness, of desolation, settled down on her world at the thought of his departure.

From the shadowy quietness of her room she heard the sharp, decisive, trap-like slam of his carriage door and the dying rattle of the wheels down the winding driveway. She was being punished as she had deserved. It seemed to her that with the passing of those carriage wheels the last remnant of something vital and warm was fading out of her life. All existence seemed to her a smooth incline of polished and treacherous ice that sloped and fell away into glacial depths. There could be neither stay nor support for her now, she felt, on that terrible slope; all she could do was to close her eyes and shut out the bottomless abysses that confronted her.

This persistent and almost unendurable sense of loneliness kept possession of her heart, notwithstanding all the intimacies and sympathies which surrounded her. Through the household of rustling relatives in black, and solemn-faced servants, and the subdued and somber half-lights of all the carefully shaded rooms, she moved like a listless ghost sighing for some upper air of memory. She was always a lover of warmth and color and movement. She was, normally, a woman of abundant vitality, and under all the ashen exterior, day by day, as her bodily strength came back to her, the smothered coals of feeling warmed and glowed with some promise of their old-time intensity.

This gave a new turn to her sense of loneliness. She longed to see Dorat; she felt the necessity for his companionship. She tried to solace herself with memories. She retraced the paths where they had once walked. She remembered the very cushion against

which the russet head had once rested and the chairs he had sat in. One dark afternoon of wind and driving rain she had even flung herself with a little passionate cry on the keyboard of the piano where his soul had cried out to hers; through the hot tears she found herself gazing down on the insensate ivory keys.

When Dorat wrote to her an impetuous and forlorn note of misery, protesting that he needed her and could not live without her, she cast discretion to the winds and returned to the city. There she drove straight to Meran's studio apartment in Washington Square, only to find that both Dorat and his friend were out. There was a consultation that afternoon, the servant told her; three well-known surgeons were to examine Monsieur Dorat's injured hand, and perhaps they were to operate on it.

As her brougham turned out from the curb a hansom drove up. In it, against the shadow of the green trimming cloth of the cab hood, she could see the white and unhappy face of Dorat. A throb of pain, as tangible as a bullet shot, flashed through her breast. He seemed to her, as he sat there, so engulfed in some terrible isolation of soul, so hopeless in his misery of body and sickness of heart, that a little half-smothered, mother-like cry of pity broke from Charlotte's lips. He seemed only the crushed shell of a man; the very flame of life seemed to have died out of him. He was defeated and broken and hopeless. Now, of all times, he needed all the warmth that love could fling about him, all the care and appeasing tenderness that friendship could bring to him. She watched him dismount and pay the driver, and then saw him turn and pace the round of the autumnal square as though it was madness itself he was walking out of his blood. She circled after him, at a funereal pace, all the while oppressed by the feeling that she was fulfilling the last rite to the ashes of something she had loved.

And she did love him, she felt. She loved him with a wildness of heart that

seemed as old as the world, that seemed timeless and boundless. It made her think that a million women had lived and died so that from hand to hand this heightening torch of love might finally be passed down to her. It had begun with the first animal-cry of some lonely she-thing for its primitive mate; it was old and irresistible and unreasoning. For good or for bad, for sorrow or for happiness, she must bow to it. All along that lonely furrow, turned up, as it were, by the plow-share of her unhappiness, she seemed to see signs and tokens of earlier comrade ghosts; an arrowhead here, a shred of pottery there, a pitiful copper bead or two somewhere else. She was not the master of her own destiny; some power above and beyond her had made her the toy of its implacably wayward caprices.

This was the feeling that ran swiftly and turgidly through her, and she followed the pacing form with her eyes, and knew from the restless, nervous stride of the thin figure that he was walking out the bitterness of some inward battle and defeat. Her first impulse was to step out of her carriage and join him. On second thought, she ordered her coachman to overtake Dorat and draw up at the curb before him.

This he did, though Dorat himself looked twice at the flutter of the black-gloved hand before he realized just who it was.

She swung wide the brougham door for him, and he stepped inside.

"Thank God, it's you!" he said, as he took her hand.

"I had to come," she answered simply.

Then, instinctively, she glanced down at the maimed hand. He followed her eyes, and turned away with a sudden little jerk of passion, gazing out of the misty carriage window at the waning afternoon.

"Is there no hope?" she asked, as bravely as she could.

"Not a shred," he answered, without looking at her.

She covered the ineloquent fingers

with her own shielding hand, uttering a little half-cry of compassion as she did so. And she, in her foolishness, had once dreamed that she might make him strong through his loneliness! She had preached to him the sermon that nothing could succeed like failure. She had vainly believed that the adversity and isolation of some almost perverse passion would leave him only his work—and her. Even in the earliest days she had once said to him: "Somebody's got to break your heart, my fine young man, before you'll ever be a true master!" She remembered his look as he answered, with his half-angry and his half-pleading bow: "Madam, I know it! The splints we bind the broken heart up with—we call it Music!"

"Oh, no; I don't mean altogether that," she had argued. "I give you credit for your twenty years of technique, but with all that, until you've suffered, you are only a voice, with nothing much to sing about!"

And there had been everything but anger in his eyes as he answered: "Then it will be only you, madam, who will make a true master of me!"

This, she told herself, was the mocking way in which fate had answered her prayer. Her reward had been ironic in its amplitude; she was like that Roman girl of whom she had once read, the gate-keeper's daughter who betrayed her city, and for it was left bleeding and buried under the weight of the very jewels she had exacted from the invading barbarians.

"Oh, Dorat," she cried, as he explained to her the disheartening decision of the surgeons, "need it seem so hopeless? After all, you are still the artist you always were. You still have your dreams, your aspirations. If one avenue of escape has been closed, can't you still find another? I mean, can't you find other tools, some other medium of expression?"

"No, there's nothing left! They said the fingers would be always stiff—see, they have only the strength of a baby's! If it had been the right hand, there would be the violin left me, for I

could still have bowed with what remained of this half-dead thing. But even then, there would be years of work!"

He drew from his pocket, with a grim smile, the poster which was to be used for his tour, the lithographed head, and the great block-type beneath it.

"Isn't it fine and handsome?" he mocked, holding it up before him. "A flake of the storm that never came! A leaf of the Spring that never arrived!"

Then he told her how he had crept into the Pachmann recital a few days before, how he had waited and listened and watched, and how he had fled from the hall in terror, feeling that he was going mad.

Although she felt the inadequacy of all argument, her mind still groped about for some alleviating outlook.

"But," she pleaded, and her voice, if not her words, carried a sudden balm to his despairing soul, "aren't all artists really one brotherhood? If it's in you, this thing we call art, won't it still struggle to find some new way of escape? Don't you remember what you said about your *Im Wald* sonata? Why can't you give your time to things like that?"

"To that?"

"Yes, to actual creation, to composition?"

Milton when he was blind, Beethoven when he was deaf, both of these men achieved their supremest triumphs. Then why, she continued in her determined bravery, could not he turn to these higher things?

"But they were masters! They were Titans!"

"Which you, in the end, can make yourself!"

"But I have to live. It means years and years of waiting!"

"What of that?"

"I am penniless, even now!" he answered.

"I have millions!" she answered very simply.

"My God, my God!" he cried, "your money—it's not money I want! It's you!"

"That you always had!" she answered, equally as simply. "It is that which is costing us both so much. It's for what that has already exacted that I feel I can never quite repay you."

"Stop!" he commanded. He turned away. Being a man, he was ashamed of his tears.

She put an arm on his shoulder, and as he felt the shielding weight of it he turned slowly and looked at her face.

He continued to look into her face, perplexed and unhappy, yet with the familiar old touch of reckless passion in his gaze. This was the woman, he remembered, who had come, golden and misty, between him and his great end; this was the face which had drifted in between him and his work. He had felt that no release could come to him until he had lived out his love for her, until he had met and conquered her, as he had met and conquered the more tangible obstacles of his earlier life. She, with her dangerously alluring loveliness, he had felt, was like a fair and milky country which the army of his ambition must devastate as it marched on. He had been impelled to pursue her with a fury that would exhaust both his own passion and her own possibilities. In the strait and rigorous path which he had chosen to follow it was demanded by the economy of existence that no soft side-issues should distract him from his end. He must march long, and he must march light.

Now, as he felt the bewildering warmth of her body so close to his own, and drank in her beauty, touched through tears into a subtler power, he knew how he had erred, from the first. He remembered, incongruously enough, what Meran had once said to him: "Whoever has a woman twisted round his finger, my son, has a woman twisted round his neck!" It was not to exhaust and devastate and forsake that this strangely new and more benignant passion called for; it was to bind and appease and possess. To hold her by combat would mean to hold her only through unrest and weariness and struggle, with all their enslaving obli-

gations. Through the milder dominion only could he now find freedom. It was veritably by tying her on his back, firmly and forever, that his hands at least might be free. Yet, at any hazard and at any sacrifice, he felt, he must now fling himself upon the surface of this vast new current, denuding or releasing as it should prove to be.

He caught the little black-gloved hand in his own, and her wondering eyes looked up at him half-timidly. He was no longer Parisian; his foreign atmosphere seemed to have crept away from him. He was one of her own continent, of her own kind.

"Oh, Charlotte!" he said, and his throat choked up like a boy's.

"Dear and dearest!" she murmured softly, and he could see the quick heaving of her breast.

Then, with a cry that might have been either anguish or joy, she had hidden her face in the hollow of his shoulder, and they were locked in each other's arms.

Outside the fragile barrier of the two misty brougham windows lights and carriages, men and women, houses and streets, flowed by them on either hand. Yet they saw and knew nothing of this world so close about them: they were alone in time and space.

It was all so incongruously and so virginally new to her, this compulsion of final love, that she could scarcely question or deny its claim. It enwrapt and bewildered her. It was only in the dim backgrounds of consciousness that any thought of her love's untimeliness, that any mockery of the hour and the circumstance, remained. She felt, with a sudden pang of half-guilty self-reproof, that until that hour she herself had been the wooer and he the wooed. She wondered if they were only the muffled deceptions of sex, those rosy reticences and advances of her timorous heart; she tried to tell herself that they were not the petty dishonesties of self-seeking, but the bending to some higher and blinder honesty beyond her woman's comprehension.

"Oh, Dorat, I love you!" she cried, beyond all reserve and reluctance now.

But even then her moment of abandonment was not all abandonment. Even while she floated freest in that new emotional element which had engulfed her she felt most keenly the tenuous yet imprisoning nets of tradition. She wondered if it were not the voice of her New England ancestry calling to her out of the past—out of the dead past that was never really dead. She wondered why the abundant life of today, the leaping and vivid dreams of tomorrow, should always be burdened and saddened with the ghost of some unforgotten yesterday.

"I know I am going to suffer for all this," she mourned, "but *I can't help it!*"

"But what have you done?" demanded the uncomprehending man at her side.

"It's not what I've done—it's what I may do—it's what *I am!*" she went on in a hopeless effort to make him understand. "But I can't help it—I've got to live my life. I've got to, whatever it costs. When the time comes I'll take my punishment, and grin and bear it!"

And still he could not understand the cause of her unhappiness.

"Oh, what shall we do? What shall we do?" she murmured out of her newer depths of helplessness, as she remembered the untimeliness of it all, the mockery of the cards as they fell from the hand of Fate.

Davis, the coachman, ever mindful of his horses, had drawn up at the curb in perplexity. A moment later a footman was at the carriage door, asking if they should turn homeward.

"No, no, not home yet!" she ordered, with the half-cruel inconsideration of a woman immured in her own unhappiness. "Tell Davis to drive up through the Park first, and then down by way of the Avenue!"

Night had settled over the tired city, and a steady stream of homeward trending carriages and motor-cars flowed past them into the quieter

regions of the upper town. A belated horseman or two clattered by on the hard asphalt. The lamp-strewn darkness of Central Park widened out into lonely silences before them.

"What shall we do?" she whispered again, as they threaded their way through the wooded gloom and the misty slopes of verdure. She was more at home there, she felt; it seemed to enisle them in a solitude through which none of earth's disheartening sordidnesses could pass. That, she vaguely surmised, was why all lovers had loved gardens. She looked up at Dorat, as she felt his shielding arm about her.

"There is only one thing, now, for us to do," he said, as she sank back on his shoulder once more. "Only one thing, as I said from the first!"

"Dear and dearest, what is it?"

"We must be together, for all time!"

"But how?"

"You must marry me, beloved!"

It was her sex, and not her heart, that spoke, as she answered him.

"But I am afraid, Dorat," she said tremulously.

"You are tired!" he soothed her.

"We must wait—oh, we must wait for a long time!" she persisted.

"But why are we to wait?" he demanded.

She held up before him the black-gloved hands, and said nothing. He understood, however.

"But *how* am I to wait?" he cried. "I have always needed and wanted you, but now I can't live without you!"

He, too, held up a hand, his wounded left hand.

She, until then, had forgotten to remember. He had remembered to forget. Still again that creeping sense of dissatisfaction, of guilt at the inopportuneness of their avowals, took possession of her. She wondered if in all life there could be no supreme moment where the rose of happiness swung without its inner canker of memory.

"We must wait—we must learn to wait a little, my own," she tried to

plead with him. "You, for a little while, must go back to your work——"

"What work?" he asked, and his hand fell as he looked at her.

"Why, your music," she began.

"I have no music!" he cried.

The pitiful look on his remembering face quite overcame her, and she caught him to her with an ardor that was almost maternal.

"Oh, you must not give that up," she declared passionately. "If you have a shred of love left for me, don't lash me with the thought of that! You are still the master you were. You must go back and *create*. You were only the interpreter before; now you must find and make your own song!"

"But there is no proof that I can! I have nothing to show that I am able to compose."

"But you must *make* the proof that you can! See, there is the *Im Wald* sonata! Yes, begin with the *Im Wald*. Make that a test. Make that a proof that I have not been, that I am not to be, a blight to your life!"

He looked at her, long and earnestly, in some way infected by the fire of her enthusiasm. He opened his lips to demur and object, but she muffled his mouth with her hand.

"Then I could honor and love you all my life!" she cried, as she waved back his extended arm, with an imperiousness that was almost disdain.

"*I can—and I will!*" he answered out of the silence that fell over them.

And as he spoke, it seemed to the woman at his side, the childish forlornness went out of his face, the sense of desolation that had hung over his slender shoulders seemed to ebb away. Yet it was that very sense of helplessness and loneliness, she told herself, that had conquered and overcome her. It had, mysteriously and yet pregnantly, brought him nearer to her. And now with her own hands she was thrusting him once more up to those heights where he would stand so menacingly alone, where she could neither follow nor understand him.

It was only the warmth of his hand-clasp, and the caress of gratitude that he flung to her, that atoned for her fleeting moment of deprivation. She tried to tell herself, as she surrendered to the arm of the strong man, already asserting his mastery, that she had always been too moody and wayward and headstrong. She would be humbler, and exact and expect less. She would wait, passively, for some ultimate subjugation; unfathomed liberties still lay in that final surrender.

"You are not unhappy now?" she asked, at last, when, after telling her of what he had determined to do, an intimate silence of perfect understanding had fallen between them.

"No—not now," he answered, as he kissed her smiling mouth, neither passionately nor yet perfunctorily, as they swung into Fifth avenue and drove homeward through the darkness.

VIII

JEAN DORAT'S *Im Wald* sonata descended on the musical world like a bolt out of a clear sky. It came so unheralded, so unlooked for, that all New York woke up one morning, rubbed its eyes, and discovered a new maker of music in its midst.

With Dorat himself it was somewhat different. For five weeks of indecision, of ineffectual vacillation, of despairing and useless effort, he had struggled and fought with the score. Once he tore it to shreds and scattered it wrathfully about the room. Twice Charlotte had rescued it, crumpled and twisted, from the waste-paper basket. She had said little, but he understood how she felt. He knew that he had to fight it out alone. Even Meran himself—Meran the grim, yet ever gentle—kept discreetly away from him, so irritable and nervous and overwrought did those five weeks of groping effort leave his friend Dorat.

It was a wet and gusty day of the sixth week that the opening movement made itself clear to the young composer. Then he locked himself

in with his inspiration—for three days he had been ill and peevish and pallid—and his meals were thrust in to him, timorously, as they might have been proffered to a caged animal. Meran and Charlotte would talk in half-whispers outside the barred door, overhearing, now and then, broken chords and the pounding of keys and a shocking curse or two of sheer wrath and the sound of the restless feet as they paced the floor—all betraying to them just how passionately Dorat was wrestling with his angel.

Even when, in a fine flush of triumphant enthusiasm, the score was completed the joy of the conquest was short-lived. In the sobering chill of reaction new faults were uncovered, fresh weaknesses were seen, and again the structure was torn apart and rebuilt.

The time came, however, when Dorat vowed he could do nothing more with it, that he was sick and tired of the very sound of it, that it would have to go out as it was, to sink or swim. He didn't much care, anyway; he was tired, and he wanted to rest.

It was arranged that Pachmann, in two weeks' time, was to play the new sonata at his second Carnegie Hall recital. Dorat himself had protested that he could never endure hearing it from the hands of another, that whether played well or ill it would only add to his unhappiness. But on the day of the concert itself he yielded to Charlotte's pleading, and together they slipped into orchestra chairs, at the end of the third number, and sat unknown and unrecognized at the back of the hall.

Pachmann was playing the Bach Chromatic Fantasia; as they settled themselves, playing it with surpassing beauty, it seemed to Charlotte, making what had always appeared to her a mere scholastic achievement now a revelation of feeling and poetry under his adroit fingers. But Dorat looked troubled. He complained, pettishly almost, it seemed to the woman at his side, of the want of judgment in putting the *Im Wald* next to Bach.

A silence fell on the hall as the opening notes of the new sonata drifted out over the audience. A quiver of apprehension, of delight, of admiration mingled with anxiety, swept through Charlotte as she listened. Her mind flew back to the day of the inception of *Im Wald*, to the scene that had followed. It was the heart of the man she loved speaking out to her, the voice of love and longing raised above all earthly conditions, speaking from spirit to answering spirit.

But was it? she suddenly asked herself, as she glanced at Dorat, rapt, unremembering, unseeing beside her. She recalled what he had said several days before, about the outsider always trying to read meanings into music. He had even cited Rubinstein's disgust with Tolstoi, over the fallacies of the *Kreutzer Sonata*, and had mocked at the many lay efforts to read words and ideas into Mendelssohn's *Lieder Ohne Worte*.

No, she decided, he had not spoken of her or to her. She was no more a part of it than the bread and meat he had eaten and forgotten, that last mad week when he was rounding it out into a finished whole.

She gazed at him where he sat listening, crumpled up in his seat, as white as paper. He neither saw nor felt the hand that lay on his arm, almost imploringly. He was detached, disembodied; she felt that he had left her at the sullen gates of some lost Eden of feeling into which she could not enter. He was above and beyond her. She felt desolately alone. She wondered if it was to be only in his earthlier moments that she was to know his companionship, if most of his life was still to be spent on these cold heights of abstraction.

She glanced down at the programme again, and a second, more complicated emotion took possession of her. She read the words again, as though they had taken on new meaning:

SONATA JEAN DORAT
(For the first time)
Allegro *Im Wald*

Adagio Abschied
Allegretto Prestissimo Warum?

She looked at Dorat once more, as he leaned forward in his seat, listening. There was none of the old platform attitudinizing about him now. He was no longer the reserved and ceremonial artist of Paris; he was the grown-up canal boy from Lachine. She saw him denuded of every saving mist of emotion. He was an anxious and nervous and moist-browed man, fretting at what seemed a fellow-man's deficient interpretation of his music, inwardly fuming at unsatisfying execution. Struggle as she might against the memory, she could not help recalling his first private recital in New York, where, at the end, he had imperiously ordered the lights lowered, and had played Chopin's Funeral March, "as a token to his dead master, Rubinstein," it had been whispered about. When the music had ended, and the burst of applause had come, and had been repeated and repeated, he still sat at the piano with bowed head. She even felt sure they were tears of actual grief that she had seen running down his bowed face, yet afterward he had confessed to her that Rubinstein had given him only five lessons altogether, and then had sent him away unceremoniously, with the crushing dictum that he was both too young and too stupid ever to learn the piano.

Yet as she listened to the last movement of the *Im Wald*, a movement that seemed one cry of passion and of protest against fate, she tried to find excuses for him. To seek and find beauty was no little thing, she told herself, at whatever cost it was, quest and conquest together. Perhaps, after all, it was jealousy, perhaps it was selfishness—if he failed, it was only the failure that went with vast accomplishment; if he had defects, they were only the great defects that went with great character.

For the final movement had ended; the burst of applause that filled the house shook the last leaf of disquiet from her mind. They had tired of

clapping now, and were standing in a body, waving and shouting, while Pachmann came back and forth, and bowed. Then he threw up his hands to intimate that Dorat was not present, while still he bowed and retired, and was again recalled.

Pachmann's manager came forward and made a little speech, regretting that Dorat was not among them to share in his justly won triumph, and promising that the sonata would be repeated at the third recital, in a fortnight's time. Whereupon the applause began once more, until the audience, exhausted, settled back again.

It was not until then that Dorat noticed the little black-gloved hand resting on his arm. He caught it up and crushed it between his two hands, impulsively, happily. There was a babble of talk about them. Through it she heard always the name Dorat, Dorat, Dorat. Women behind her were talking of his greatness. Other women in front of her were discussing his career.

He was theirs, and not hers, she inwardly cried, with a sudden pang of jealous fear. He did not belong to her; he was the world's, everybody's. She would have only the shell of him, the empty body; he must pour his heart and life out to them. She thought she had outlived her old fear of misunderstanding him, of failing to read his aims and grasp his thoughts and feelings. But two seats ahead of her a woman sat sobbing convulsively; every tear was a tribute to the beauty of Dorat's music. Yet she felt that she hated that woman; and she remembered, too, that her own eyes were dry.

"That is you, dear, you," he was saying to her. "All that is beautiful in it comes through *you*!"

She tried to return Dorat's warm pressure, but her fingers seemed limp and lifeless.

"It was for you; it was to win you!" he whispered happily.

She nodded her head, for a sudden lump had come in her throat and seemed choking her.

"Won't it do, my own?" he pleaded.

How she wanted him; how she wanted all of him! She was blind and mad! She had nothing but love for him, consuming, all-powerful, jealous in its passion to hold and guard him.

"Won't it do, my own?" he repeated, leaning close to her and whispering the words almost in her ear.

"Yes," she answered inadequately. "Yes."

Then she startled and perplexed him with a sudden and quite unlooked-for gush of tears. In the gloomy passageway, as they groped their way out, she stooped down and, catching up his hand, kissed it with a little abandoned sigh of helplessness.

There was something so humbled, so resigned in the touch that he looked at her in wonder.

"Charlotte, what is it?" he asked.

"It's—it's only love, I think," she answered.

IX

THE same newspapers which contained the notices of Jean Dorat's success in a new field of music also announced that Mrs. Stephen Cranfill was about to sail for Europe. Both Cedarhurst and her Fifth avenue house, it was explained, would remain closed for at least a year. Her health, since the tragic death of her husband, had been far from satisfactory, and her physicians had advised that she recoup for a Winter at least in some of the quieter of the Continental watering-places.

In three weeks Dorat followed her abroad, and they met in London. His passage had been a stormy one, and the wretchedness of his seasickness was still stamped on his fatigued and worn-looking face.

The meeting, too, was untimely, for Charlotte had just signed certain legal papers, made necessary through the death of her husband, and the room seemed cramped and draped with all the huddled old memories of her former life.

"I have come to you—for good!" Dorat said, not allowing himself to be chilled by the coldness of her look and touch.

She felt herself on the brink of a great happiness, and yet she seemed unable to make the move which would fling her out into its depths. She looked up at him out of silent and brooding eyes. She once more wondered if it was the old New England conscience turning in its grave.

Then she remembered how desolate and empty her three weeks of waiting had been, and compellingly, henceforth, she felt the need of him and his love.

"I could not have waited another day," he said, as he noticed her mute little gesture, and interpreted it as excess of emotion, captivated by the very seeming poverty of her language of love.

She felt the old anesthesia as his lips met hers, and, once in his arms, all the old scruples seemed forgotten, and she was murmuring how she loved him, and how she had missed him.

Three days later they were married, quietly, on an afternoon of clearing weather. The sun, through the misty London air, seemed warm and balmy, like the sun of Spring itself, as they came into the bright light from the dimness of the chapel. Charlotte cried a little, as they drove homeward, although she tried to tell herself that the day had in every way been auspicious.

She watched, anxiously and fearfully, for some slightest change of tone or attitude in Dorat; but he was even more tender and quietly thoughtful than before. After all, she argued with herself, in her hour of final surrender, the great artist must always be the great lover. It was only that her whole nature was still in revolt against the past; it was that alone which made her still question and probe and hesitate, she inwardly averred. It was through that alone that she had not come to her lover so young and virginal as she might have done.

From London Dorat and Charlotte started out for a month's cruise in Mediterranean waters.

The four weeks of this cruise always remained dream-like to Charlotte; it was so much more quietly happy than she had ever dared to hope. It seemed to obliterate the past, and day by day steeped her in some greater calm of supreme contentment. It seemed the complete quiet and happiness of repose in passion. In that mysterious love languor she looked for no more than the moment gave. It brought with it, not a sense of bondage, but one of freedom. Even her hope for the future grew fixed and strong. The one thing that frightened her a little was her own composure, her own tranquillity of mood and feeling. On deck, at times, she would study Dorat unobserved, and she knew and felt that he was happy; that in every way she had fulfilled all his hopes and expectations. He was now reality to her, a human of the humans. It was the man, the man himself, she had been living and breathing and walking beside; and she was no longer oppressed by the old feeling of his flame-like insubstantiality, of his elusive and volatile artist's temperament.

She could see, too, that Dorat was as happy as she herself. If she had been grateful for some mysterious release and for change of scene, he in turn was glad of idleness and rest. With renewing strength, too, his old-time spirit came back to him, and he fell to telling her, light-heartedly, of his early trials and experiences, of the comedies and little tragedies of his student days, of his friends and his adventures in Paris. In fact, it was of Paris that he talked most, and in her secret heart of hearts she grew a little afraid of that city and its memories for him. When, unexpectedly, they decided to linger a few weeks in Palermo, she was not altogether surprised that Dorat had a grand piano and a writing-desk moved into their apartment, for already she could detect faint signs of his returning hunger for work.

The gardens of their rented villa were quite large enough for them to stroll and wander about in, by day, if they so desired. But Monreale and the heights of Monte Pellegrino often lured them beyond their own walls, and once or twice a week they hired donkeys, and from the summit feasted on the matchless blue of Conca d'Oro, and the islands of the Sicilian Apennines, and the white loveliness of Palermo surrounded by groves of orange-trees and palms. Once, at a caprice of Dorat's, they slept at the monastery of Santa Rosalia, and the musician, maimed hand and all, charmed the monks by playing for them on the great old organ.

Some compressed and softer side of Charlotte seemed to expand in the wonderful Southern loveliness of sea and land and mountain which surrounded her. The exuberant Southern growths, the luxuriant beauty and color, the glory of sunset and sunrise, of flower and tree and ruin, had in some way taken, as she put it, "the New England chill out of her bones." Life seemed drenched and heavy with beauty. The day seemed to carry with it its own delight and its own fulfillment.

It was as she closed the villa windows one night—for the odors of the garden flowers were so strong they could not sleep in the overpowering heaviness of them—that Dorat came to her side and gazed with her out over the darkening land and paling water.

"Did you know this was the land," he asked her, "that moved Goethe to write 'Kennst du das Land?'"

"It is no wonder!" she answered, as she lingered at the window with the casement half-closed.

Then they both looked northward, and sighed happily. His kiss, as she closed the window for the night, had all the rapture of the first touch of their awakening love. She was happier than she deserved.

Never had she seemed more beautiful to Dorat as during those tranquil days in the midst of their Sicilian garden. She seemed to melt and merge into

something so sweetly mobile, so softly pliant and yielding, that every move and touch of her body seemed endearing and subjugating. It was only when away from her, during her brief absences, that a new and ever-growing sense of unrest crept over her husband. He fell into the habit of talking more and more of Paris, of friends and artists there, of what they should do when once settled. Yet the more he talked of Paris the more that vast city became a dread to the troubled heart of Charlotte.

They were so happy now, she pleaded, why not remain as long as they could? It was their honeymoon; it was the one time of supreme happiness in all their life. So why give it up until forced to do so?

She thought to appease his restlessness by a change of scene; so once more they made ready to journey eastward, for a week or two at Taormina.

Monte Pellegrino stood out huge and purple against the soft rose flush of the early dawn on the morning of their departure. As they watched, the first shafts of the rising sun touched the white line of the sleeping city, shone tenderly on the dark palms, on the great elms and the clustered gloom of the orange groves. The sky turned from rose to gold and from gold to azure, until it hung a dome of cobalt over a sea of even deeper hue. It seemed too exquisite to forsake, Charlotte felt, as they watched the white city recede further and further, become a white speck on the skyline, and then sink altogether out of sight.

"Good-bye, happiness, good-bye," she called back, as she leaned out over the rail.

Yet her fears proved unfounded, for she and Dorat seemed only drifting from beauty to beauty. They stayed only a week at Taormina, but it was a week of unbroken contentment. One placid evening as they were steaming nearer and nearer the Greek isles, on a sea of perfect calm, the far-away tones of a guitar reached her ears.

A golden moon was floating slowly up in the east, the sea was azure and

purple, as motionless as the sky above them. Through the gathering darkness they heard the sound of song and then a sudden sense of overpowering sweetness smote her as two boats drifted by, laden to their bulwarks with Parma violets.

A feeling of passionate languor stole over her, a feeling not unlike that she had known, she remembered, when Dorat had once played Chopin to her and mysteriously made her body drunk with love.

She reached out for him impetuously, and crushed his hand between her hot palms.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked.

He stroked the gold-brown hair that crowned the head fallen back into his lap, and gazed eastward at the rising moon.

"And you?" she asked.

"I was thinking of Paris, of work, of what you and I shall have to do before long," he said, after a silence. "I was thinking that I might do something big—that I might write an opera!"

"Must we go?" she pleaded still again.

"Dear and dearest" (he had caught the phrase from her), "we must. And the sooner the better."

She sighed heavily. It was not that he was tired of love, she told herself; it was only that he was tired of idleness. The young tiger had known his first taste of blood; she, in her madness, had flung him his first bait, and now he must be stalking and hunting through all the world for fame.

It was one soft and starlit night at Ragusa that he brought up the thought of Paris again.

"Paris always seems to teach what Art is," he told her. "And it teaches what life is, too. It's the only city that seems to lift the soul up to the praise of life—and that, after all, is Art! Every café there is a sort of college. Only, instead of studying old books, you can sit and study life, life, always new! It's the only city where you can exile yourself in front of an inn and look down on life as a picture, and love

the sound of it as one loves music! What it is, or why it is, I don't know; but it's there, and it always seems calling me back!"

"Must we go back?" she whispered wistfully.

He nodded the head she had drawn down to her brooding face.

"Then kiss me!" she said incongruously, and locked her arms about his bent head, as though in a farewell, and held him there passionately.

X

ONCE back in Paris Dorat fell on his work with a ferocity that seemed to the wondering Charlotte almost tigerish. She had thought, as they first settled themselves in their apartment on the avenue du Bois de Boulogne, that in certain ways she would still be able to share Dorat's labors with him. In this, however, she was soon disillusioned.

She began to see that his new ambition demanded both mental and bodily freedom. He had even been forced to tell her, with delicacy and gentleness enough, that their old habit of day-long companionship must be broken. It was the opera that he was now struggling with, he confessed to her; it was to bear the title of "Hero and Leander." If only his scores could be worked out to the end after the manner in which he had begun them, then she would be able to forgive him; he laughingly chided her for shutting himself up all morning, like a hermit in his cave, day after day.

It troubled her a little when she discovered that for weeks past he had been thinking and brooding about this new opera, and that even his strangely expressed wish to continue their cruise to the Hellespont had been rooted only in self-interest, in a longing to see the spot where his Hero and Leander had once lived and died.

Through the very days during which he had seemed so much her own the thin edge of this widening wedge of art had already been cleaving their lives, she told herself, one gray and

rainy afternoon when she discovered that her husband, without consulting her, had arranged an apartment at the top of the house for his music-room. There, from eight until one, he would work undisturbed; there he would be strictly alone.

It was foolish and selfish, she tried to tell herself, to cry out against Dorat's natural devotion to his work. But they had been so much together; their lives and thoughts and feelings had grown so intertwined during those months of early idleness and intimacy, that now her loneliness weighed heavily upon her.

She tried to struggle against these feelings, but in vain. She succeeded, however, in hiding her hours of depression, even occasional tears, from her husband, though day by day he more and more noticed the sense of constraint and moodiness that hung over her.

"I have it," he said one day, suddenly looking up from the score he had brought down with him to the luncheon-table. "Why not study with Meran? Why not take up your painting again?"

The suggestion appealed to Charlotte. It would not only give her new interests, but it might, in time, put her on a more equal standing with Dorat. She, like her husband, would be a disciple of that exacting mistress, Art. It would serve, perhaps, to bring more happily together their slowly divorcing thoughts and interests and feelings.

So it was arranged that Charlotte should go three days out of the week to the atelier of Meran in the Boulevard Haussmann, for criticism and drawing.

In one thing she had found her fears of Dorat and his city life quite groundless. It had been the distractions and excitements of Paris that she had feared. She had expected to find Dorat's apartments the centre of continuous gaiety and movement; she had looked for his countless friends to be carrying him off night and day. Yet she was now being daily astonished by the simplicity of his life. He had objected to luxurious apartments; he wanted to live simply and freely. He had set his face against "hotel" life,

and from the first had seemed perfectly content in the cold and lonely rooms of their rented apartment. He had many friends, it was true, but most of them seemed his old studio and atelier comrades. She had no fear of them, she knew; and although she was a little bewildered by the apparent coolness and ease with which these men and women of the studios spoke of love and liaisons, no half-expected barbed arrow as to Dorat's previous life ever reached her breast. In fact, as she grew to know him more minutely and completely, she decided in secret that any man who had so left behind him the mere ventral delights of life was very unlikely to confront her with any ghosts of old indiscretions. And in this she was not amiss. Dorat had never been a loose liver.

Charlotte plunged into her work valiantly, and soon grew to take a quiet delight in her mornings with Meran. His was a beautiful old studio, belittered with rugs and canvases, tapestries and curios; and from the high, many-paned windows could be seen a wide view of Paris, with Montmartre in the centre distance.

"You came to me as a pupil?" Meran had said to her, not unkindly, looking at her in some perplexity. She had always liked this gray-bearded man of few words. She had long since decided that he was as soft-hearted as he was hard-headed.

She told him where and how she had studied before.

"But, my dear madam, I have never before taken a pupil. I would scarcely know how to treat one. I work here day after day, like a bear in a cave, without seeing a soul but my model!"

Then they were *all* like bears in a cave, decided Charlotte.

"Well, I'll come and stir up the cage," she laughed back at him. And true to her word, she made it a habit to carry an armful of flowers up to the luxurious yet dusty old studio three times a week.

"And what a dear old polar bear

he is!" she confessed later to Dorat, as she told him of her conviction that Meran had thought her a mere idler, and had suggested that she start with chalk and portfolios, and later had even seemed brusquely satisfied with her brush-work. He had suggested, too, that she come every morning for a shorter lesson, if need be.

"Will you be jealous, dear and dearest?" she asked, as she pushed her fingers up through the tangled mass of his russet-brown hair.

He laughed and kissed her.

"There's no man in Paris I would trust before Meran. And there's no woman in the world I would trust more than you!"

Then he led her gaily up to his music-room and showed her the score of his completed first act of "Hero and Leander." They picked out the airs together at the piano, and Charlotte even attempted one of the solos, her husband beating time with a roll of music.

"Ah, wait until you hear Mlle. Beauharnais sing that!" he cried, as he flung down his roll of music.

"Who is Mlle. Beauharnais?" asked Charlotte, as she turned the pages of the score.

"My saving angel, I hope," answered Dorat, as he dashed down a few notes that had just come to him. "My saving angel," he repeated absently, as he turned to the piano. "She is the first soprano at the Opéra, you know!"

"Oh!" said his wife half-wearily, and she suddenly remembered that her morning work had left her tired and restless.

"Dorat, you *must* have Marcelle keep a fire in this room when you're here working. It's as cold as charity!"

"I never notice it," he answered from the piano.

She looked at him curiously. She felt cheated at the thought that she was denied those inner fires at which he could so readily warm himself.

XI

THE weeks slipped away, and Dorat rewrote scene after scene of "Hero

and Leander," added new touches to the opera, and in the end rescored the entire manuscript.

Charlotte's earlier secret distaste for his Parisian friends seemed to wear away as the Winter advanced, although she was still haunted by the feeling of being a foreigner among foreigners, and often speculated in secret on what might be happening in New York, or at Cedarhurst, at some particular moment of abstraction. Saturday after Saturday, however, she found herself among the gay and distinguished circle which Dorat's confrères in general and the Princess Branicka in particular always gathered about them—students of the Beaux-Arts, a handful of diplomats, a scattering of wandering English noblemen, gay young fellows from the American quarter, long-haired Polish musicians, and resplendent actresses and singers from the Odéon and the Opéra.

Charlotte grew fond of some satisfying half-excitement in the flash and stir of these gatherings. She even noticed, a little to her inward distress, that from the new circle into which she was merging she had caught a new openness of mind. It gave her, however, some outlet for her old-time audaciousness of spirit.

"I'm suffering from ingrowing American conscience!" she once confessed to Dorat.

She no longer felt abashed before the half-draped models of the studios; she no longer knew any fleeting prick of conscience at the growing tenderness with which Meran spoke and worked and talked with her. When her own receptions had duly begun she carried them off with an imperious dash and flush of excitement that soon won for her the name of being one of the most American of Parisian hostesses.

"We are good fellows, all of us," she said to Meran one night, after an evening of unusual romping—Dorat was busy on the last act of his "Hero and Leander"—and the last of her guests were taking themselves off.

"We're good fellows, all of us, so why can't we get a little fun out of life?"

"Yes, why shouldn't we?" said Meran, as he stooped to kiss her hand. Some pregnant inflection of his voice caused Charlotte to flash a look of half-angry inquiry at him. Yet he went away so quietly, so humbly, that she began to think she had done him an injustice.

On the following day, when she went for her lesson, Meran was not in his studio. A quick sense of disappointment crept over her at this discovery; just why she did not know.

She walked homeward listlessly. Her thoughts, all that morning, had been running more poignantly than ever back to her earlier life, and again she had caught herself wondering just what was taking place at home (she still thought of New York as home), and if many changes had befallen the old faces and the old circles and the old scenes.

She was surprised, as the house door opened for her, to find the apartment flooded with the full notes of a woman's soprano voice, pulsating down from Dorat's music-room.

She realized with a pang just what it meant. "Hero and Leander" was completed; the woman from the Opéra was going over the score.

And Dorat had not even told her! There indeed was a sign of just how far he had let himself drift away from his wife. She had filled the siphon, and nothing more; the natural flow of mental labor had drained away his emotion and sympathy. He had told her that no man could serve two masters; he was elbowing her aside, not only in his labor, but in his hours of leisure.

She stood listening to the compelling, pulsing soprano. Then, in some way caught by the charm of the music, she mounted the stairs and made her way to the music-room.

"Now, again, my dear Natalie!" Dorat was saying excitedly in French. "Now, again, with more stress and spirit in the finale!"

Charlotte stepped into the room.

They stood with their backs to her, Dorat at the piano, the singer beside him. It was Mlle. Beauharnais.

Charlotte listened, breathless, as the impassioned love-song broke from the flexible, well-trained throat and the flood of music once more filled the all but empty room. She could see Dorat imparting rhythm to the passage by a nervous little movement of the hand and body; she could feel the subtle spirit which seemed to make the singer and player one, as the movement reached its climax and died away in a burst of passion.

"Adorable, Natalie, adorable!" cried the musician, as he caught the singer and kissed her excitedly on either cheek. "Now you are giving a soul to the music!"

An almost soundless little gasp burst from the throat of the woman standing beside the door, with one hand clutching at the swaying portière.

As through a mist she saw Beauharnais put two friendly hands on her husband's arm laughingly, while they turned back to the score and once more struggled with the aria.

Charlotte groped her way from the room. It meant nothing, she told herself pantingly, and yet it meant so much. She was alone in the world, friendless and unloved. She tried to lash herself into a fury of jealous rage, even while she confessed to herself the utter impersonality of Dorat's action. This was why he could be happy and contented without her! He would call it all the *camaraderie* of the artist; he would laugh at it and say that she was as *exigeante* as ever.

As she groped her way down through the quiet halls she met a servant and Bartet, the tenor. That gentleman was all bows and apologies for being so late—he had been unavoidably detained at the Opéra.

Charlotte sent him on his way up to the music-room with a far-away frigidity of voice and iciness of manner that left him gasping a little as he made his escape. Then she swept into her room and, having securely locked the door, surrendered herself

to the inconsequence of many hot and bitter tears.

That night at dinner no trace of the tempest through which she had passed remained on her face. She waited, however, with an almost tragic alertness of attention, for Dorat's welcoming kiss. It seemed neither colder nor warmer than that of other evenings; it left everything still in the balance.

"Has your day been happy, dear and dearest?" Dorat asked her, wondering at the sustained silence, so unusual with her.

She had been thinking of America, of New York, calling back to her mind faces and scenes, the familiar brown-stone cañones, the wavering double line of Fifth avenue arc-lights, the homelier warmth of the New World homes.

"Happy enough!" she said. She looked up from her plate and smiled with her lips, but the unparticipating New England eyes remained cold.

"And Meran, how is he?"

She was on the point of telling Dorat that she had failed to find Meran at home that morning; but on second thoughts she decided not to do so.

"Meran grows more delightful, more kindly, day by day," she said to him instead. "And I love him more and more."

Dorat raised his eyebrows; then laughed his easy little laugh.

"And the work, how does it go?" he continued, after a pause.

He was catechizing her as he might a schoolgirl.

She flung down her knife and fork with an impetuous little cry.

"Work! I'm sick and tired of it! I can never do anything at it! *I'm not an artist, and I never will be one!*"

He looked up, startled.

"I—I tell you, Jean, tubes and brushes and things like that can *never* take the emptiness out of life for me!"

"Charlotte!"

At one time, she felt, he would have come to her. Now he sat studying her with cold and wondering eyes. And this was her Dorat, her lover and husband! It was not the love of a

woman such as she was that he demanded. He was killing it in her. It was only cat's love that he wanted—something soft and purring, for his hand to fall down to in a moment of idleness. But she was losing him, she was losing him, was the thought that danced and pirouetted insanely in the background of her consciousness.

"Oh, Jean," she suddenly began to plead, her passionate eyes close to his face, "can't we take a holiday, for a week, for two weeks? Can't just you and I slip away for a week or two, to Palermo, where we were so happy?"

She felt, perversely enough, that the old setting might still again frame the old contentment of heart and mind.

"But how could we, now?" Dorat asked. She was as exigent as a child.

"But why not?" More and more she was beginning to feel that she would lose him for all time if no sudden break came in the present trend of things.

"But there is the opera! That will go on sometime within a few weeks! It's impossible, Charlotte! It's almost absurd!"

"Then not even for my happiness, not even when you know it's my profoundest wish—" she broke off despairingly. "Oh, this is the penalty! This is what I suffer for—for one false move, for one mistake!"

The strident hardness of her voice left him amazed. Her eyes were flashing back at him angrily. It crept through her mind, as she gazed at him, that the marriage she had thought was to complete and perfect her was in reality deforming and demeaning her. For there she stood, bitter, rebellious, exacting, irritable, draped in a sudden selfishness which even she herself could see and hate! That egoistic individualism which had once made her seem so charmingly audacious now made her narrow and exacting; she was more than the passive flowering of a soft and padded environment, she was a wilful and arbitrary woman consumed with a humiliating jealousy which she could not understand.

Dorat looked back at her studiously;

he noticed for the first time the tender hollow that had come under either delicate cheek-bone, the half-wistful shadows that hung under the wide, gray-blue eyes.

"Charlotte, are you ill?" he demanded.

"No, I'm not ill," she cried back at him. "It is something worse than illness!"

What a tangle of imperiousness and caprice, of beauty and wilfulness she was, thought Dorat, as he saw the impending tears on her eyelashes.

He arose from his chair and came and stood beside her, catching her resisting hands in his.

"Dear and dearest," he said, slowly and quietly, "I want you to remember that I am passing through a rather trying period. I have been fatigued and frustrated and disappointed. You know how delighted some of my enemies would be if I should fail with this opera! Then why not bear with me a little while? Why not help and not hinder me?"

"Help you? How can I help you? It's Beauharnais you need to plead with, I should think!"

"Beauharnais? Why do you mention her?"

"Beauharnais—why do you caress her?" she flashed back at him.

He passed to the other side of the table, the better to see her face.

"Then, this is why—" he began.

"No, it's *not* why! It's only one of many other things! If you *must* kiss these women, what's that to me?"

"Charlotte, we are both ridiculous. Natalie Beauharnais is to be my *prima donna*. She has never been anything to me; she never could be anything to me—but a friend. I need her for my work. She is everything to my success!"

He seemed to grow suddenly angry at the thought that all such demeaning explanations were even demanded of him.

"Why, instead of suspecting her and antagonizing her, you—you ought to be helping me to conciliate and win her, helping me to get her sympathy, her enthusiasm!"

"And make everything grist for the mill!" she mocked.

"You ought to be helping *me*, I say, instead of trying to mar everything with your moods!"

"You mean for me to kiss her on one cheek while you salute her on the other!"

"This is unjust!" rejoined her husband.

"*Will you take me to Palermo?*" she reiterated, in her inconsequential madness.

He leaned forward and gazed at her across the narrow table.

"Do you insist?" he demanded, with a sudden pallor on his face.

She moved her head; it meant that she did.

He smote the board suddenly with his clenched fist.

"Then we shall go to Palermo, you and I! We shall go, and we shall have our holiday! But I warn you beforehand what it will mean. It will mean defeat for me and my work, and some fine afternoon it may mean ennui; and sometime still later it may mean weariness and—and even worse!"

"You threaten me?" she cried.

"No. I love you, Charlotte; I always have loved you. But any man must resent a woman's moods and caprices—however he may once have cared for her—coming between him and his life's work. If you insist that we go off on this mad excursion——"

"Stop," she cried scornfully. "It is not at all necessary. I need not go alone."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean just what I say, and more. I mean I have been meek and quiet and humble for months and months; I mean that I'm getting tired and sick of being an incident in your life, a sort of accident in petticoats in your affairs. I have been a mouse, hiding about the dark corners of your ambition, getting the crumbs that you let fall. I tell you, Dorat, I am not *made* that way! I can't live that sort of life! I want to see some end, some meaning, to my existence! I have got to give myself up to something or somebody!"

He sat back, gasping at the unlooked-for outburst, which left her white and shaking.

"That is the talk of a— Charlotte, do you know and understand just what you are saying?"

"Every word!"

"Then," he cried, rising to his feet once more, "then I take back what I have said. We will not go to Palermo, either you or I!"

He saw the steel-like challenge in her flashing eye and something acid and biting beneath her defiant laugh.

"But I *shall* go!" she insisted.

"Then it will be for good—forever!" he declared, as he smote the table again. He looked at her for a moment—it seemed with a look of hate—then he got up and left the room, white and sick and shaken.

XII

LIKE all women, Charlotte demanded that her husband should be a despot. But she further ordained, and here once more she was not unlike many of her sex, that he should be large-minded and benevolent in that despotism. She had scarcely dreamed that it was to be *his* desire which was to push beyond its frontier, that it was his life of thought and feeling which was to have its *terra incognita*.

During the day that followed their stormy scene at the dinner-table, when Dorat was struggling to the verge of exhaustion with the instrumentation of "Hero and Leander," the unhappy young wife had both time and chance enough to brood over what had taken place.

She could acknowledge to herself the fact that music, at its best, was a spiritual issue, and that all spiritual issues can be fought out only in loneliness and self-analysis. The only way to make him, then, would be to forsake him. She would at least have that balm for the bruise. When the rupture *did* come it would mean not only her own liberation, but his emancipation as an artist as well. It would

even be doing him a service, she told herself perversely, as she tried to look out on life without thought of him.

He had not been altogether kind to her; he had not even been just to her. She, as a woman, had given up so much! It was with her, she felt, as though he had turned on a gas-jet, yet had struck no timely match to burn away the poisonous and stupefying fumes which otherwise might have lighted away the very gloom of life itself. He was slowly asphyxiating her with her own unclarifying idleness, her own unliberated passion. Indifference was the one thing she could not endure. She even wished, waywardly, that Dorat would give her some coarse and brutal cause for despising him. She *did* despise him, his eternal talk about his art, his narrowness of view, his contempt for the things that had once meant so much in her life. No; she had reached the Great Divide of existence!

The smoldering fire of her too compressed affectional nature, during the next few mornings, flung a smoke of bewilderment about the face of Meran. She had been wayward with him; she had been tender to him; she had gazed at him with wistful and questioning eyes, until all the joy and peace of life had gone out of that grim old artist's heart. But being both a man of the world and a man of honor, he gave no sign.

"Oh, *cher maître*, I am so unhappy!" she burst out, one bright and frosty morning, as she turned to draw on her gloves and take her departure from the studio.

"Beauty, madam, should never be a burden!" he laughed back at her evasively, as he scraped his palette.

Yet she had never seemed more beautiful to him, touched with some fleeting sense of tears, like April lowlands overhung by a rainbow, suggestive of softness, of deep-bosomed fecundity, of impending mild germinations, of brooding motherhood itself.

"Meran!"

He looked at her hesitatingly, then

he came and stood before her. His eyes were still wide with questioning.

"Meran, can't you help me?"

He moved toward her; then he closed his eyes. He stood motionless, his bewildered body the battleground of silent and contending forces.

Then, to wring the tragedy out of the trying moment, he bent ceremoniously and kissed her hand.

"Anything, Madame Dorat—I would do anything for you!"

Charlotte knew it, yet she was more merciless than she had imagined she could be. She knew she was mad, malignant, tigerish; but she could only hear the blood surging drunkenly and recklessly through her veins.

"Will you come with me—*will you take me to Palermo with you?*"

He stepped back from her, with his arms outthrust, as though to shield himself from some invisible impending blow. His face was as colorless as the canvas he had just stretched for her on the paint-bespattered little easel.

"I want you to!" she cried, following him and seeming to float into his reluctant arms.

She saw the anguish written on his face. But something within her, some power not herself, seemed lashing her on to desperation.

"You will, won't you?" she pleaded in her girlish soft contralto.

"No!" he answered. "I will not!"

She found an inapposite joy in her power to move and torture him.

"I'm going to come back—you will go—you can't help it!" she cried, from the doorway.

XIII

CHARLOTTE'S most dominant or coherent feeling, once out in the open air and for the first time able to comprehend the situation, was one of passionate triumph. She had vindicated herself. She had shaken the torpidity out of life for all time. She wanted her freedom to breathe and climb, whatever the cost. She had taken it of old; and what she once was she could still be.

Then, as she drifted through the hard, Parisian sunlight, so lucid and sane and exacting, sitting back in her open carriage, a mood of scruples and self-questioning came over her. A moment before it had seemed that lips of seraphic softness had somewhere whispered for her to arise and live and claim her own. Now the words seemed to come hissing out of some too beguiling serpent-mouth. For the first time the enormity of her error came home to her. She was a meddler; she had always marred things! She was wrecking three lives: her own, Dorat's, Meran's!

She was abandoning everything that made her honest and upright and worthy as a woman. Once having essayed that ultimate step, no matter what liberation or happiness it brought her, she was doomed, at heart, to be one of those demi-mondaine beings who wandered homelessly and friendlessly about Southern Europe, trying to feather the nest of life with the pitifully meager down of their bedraggled Cupids. And *would* it bring her liberation and happiness? After all, what was Meran to her or she to Meran?

"Oh, Dorat, Dorat," she cried, in her unjust disjointedness of emotion, "why were you not a brute to me? Why can't you make me hate you or love you with my whole heart? Why can't you bully and bind and compel me? *You haven't half tamed and broken me!*"

Involuntarily her thoughtless finger went up to the little scar on her forehead, carefully hidden by the long waves of hair, parted boy-like, on the side.

She looked out at the bright and sunny city before her, and wondered how it would seem to her eyes in a month, in a year, from that day.

She was passing through the Quartier de l'Europe, and her gaze fell on a familiar-looking home of white stone. It was the hotel of Auguste Speridon, the artist and collector, the very house where a week before she had flashed her triumphant way through

the reception-room, and danced her way into the heart of half official Paris, and had her sally and verbal duel with the brilliant and flamboyant Comte Gerard de Montesquieu, and had been brought away in the early hours of the morning by her tired and silent husband, who had dropped in for a few minutes at the last, after a night's work on his eternal scores.

Something in life, she told herself, was making her hard and small and self-contained. Once, she had been only too ready to spur and trumpet him on to his work. *She* had been the serious and solemn and aspiring one then; it was he, she had once feared, who would prove the light and capricious spirit.

She drew in her breath, suddenly, with a little gasp of surprise, as she looked out over the sunlit street.

There, passing her in the open street, was Dorat himself. She fluttered a half-tremulous, half-hesitating hand at him. But he neither turned nor saw her. Under the shadow of the hooded street cab he looked white and frail and ill. He looked like an old man; he was no longer young! His head was bent forward and a little to one side, in his habitual attitude of abstraction.

A feeling of his isolation, his weariness of soul, his childlike need of companionship, crept through her. This was followed by a sudden, surging passion of half-motherly pity, of commiserating pardon for conditions that demanded no pardon, of longing to be with and near him.

She remembered, inconsequentially yet sharply enough, the formal marriage promises she had made to him in the little London chapel. She had promised, as her whole body thrilled with the pride and weight of it, to love and cherish him in sickness and in health. Yet what had she done? From the first, from the very first, she had been an ingrate and a marplot. She had made life hard and lonely and uphill for him. No, no; it was not Dorat that she hated; it was herself that she despised and was afraid of!

She ordered her driver to swing about and hurry back to Meran's apartment in the Boulevard Haussmann.

Once there, she winged her way up the stairs as though her life depended on it. Her area of revolt had known its purgation; the Vesuvian fires of temperament had risen and subsided. Now she was all meekness, contrition, wistfully yielding. The pendulum had swung forward and back again.

She found Meran pacing his studio floor.

It was a stormy scene, and an unhappy one, for both of them. Yet she almost joyed in the sting and the humiliation of it; each pang, she felt, was the price she was paying for her foolishness.

Meran, from first to last, lied to her astutely; valiantly declaring that he had taken it all for the play-acting it was, protesting he had waited for her return and repentance—and all the while his white face and unhappy eyes were giving the lie direct to what only the courageous mouth was saying. He was the friend he had always been, and nothing more.

At that she kissed him on both his cheeks, after the manner of the French, and tried to tell him, through her tears, how much bigger and truer men were than women.

"Let this be our secret," she said to him, and her smile was like the flash of water through gloomy pines. "Oh, Meran, we must make this a sort of seal on our friendship!"

As she made her escape from him, jubilantly miserable, proudly humiliated, she suddenly remembered that just as she had kissed the cheeks of Meran so her husband had saluted Natalie Beauharnais, after the fashion of the land. The one wiped out the score of the other. They were now on an equal footing. Yet hers had been the less innocent touch, she knew, and from her, because of it, would have to come the more absolute atonement.

On the landing below Meran's she paused in the hallway. Some English students in the atelier before her were

singing a song to the tinkling music of zithers and guitars.

This is a spray the bird clung to,
 Making it blossom with pleasure,
 Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
 Fit for her nest and her treasure.
 Oh, what a hope beyond measure
 Was the poor spray's that the flying feet
 hung to—
 So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

Charlotte instinctively gazed back up the gloomy stairway, and thought of Meran.

"But sometime he will learn to forgive me, I know," she murmured.

Yet in a vague way she felt, as she passed down the stairs into the strong sunlight of the open street, that it was a dangerous thing to play with souls.

XIV

THE open course of fate always seemed so frustrated with side-issues; the world went so crookedly always; in the whirlpools and backwaters of existence hopes and wishes and realities were forever getting so inextricably mixed and tangled and torn! Such were the thoughts that ran disjointedly through Charlotte's contrite and unhappy head, after a weary day of self-disgust and self-discovery.

She would have flown to Dorat on the wings of love, she would have hastened to him, open-armed and humble-hearted; but once more she found that emotion and opportunity did not always coincide. Dorat was not to be found. He was not at home. He was to be unearthed at none of his familiar haunts, and neither servants nor friends could enlighten Charlotte as to his whereabouts.

It was from the effusive little Signor Alliotto, the second tenor of the Opéra, whom she met by chance coming from the Princess Branicka's, that Charlotte learned the truth.

It came to her with a second and keener stab of pain, for it showed her how self-immured and illiberal she had been.

It was the night of "Hero and

Leander's" rehearsal, the culminating point of all of Dorat's effort.

Charlotte flew after the disappearing Alliotto, and asked him how she might secure admission tickets to the rehearsal. There should be no trouble, the little tenor informed her. All that was necessary was a card from her own husband. The signora was much to be envied. She had the first claim on M. Dorat. Many women had begged in vain for cards from the great composer. There had been much talk. He could not say anything. But soon the world would know, and the signora would then be the proudest of women. It was wonderful, sublime. He could not say more, but she would see what she would see.

Charlotte, in desperation, went straight to Meran once more, and begged him to see her husband—she had been told that Dorat had neither slept nor eaten in two days—and to get a card and a line or two from him for admission to the final rehearsal.

This Meran dutifully set out to do, leaving Charlotte behind, to be tossed like a tennis-ball from court to court of opposing feelings, as she gazed out with unseeing eyes on the height of Montmartre.

"I cannot live with myself! That is the whole secret! All these years I have been trying to escape from something, and that something has been myself. I have tried to lose myself in my puny little scraps of painting. I have tried to lose myself in love. And it has all been to escape from myself! I have been demanding eternal sun, and hating shade; and all the time I have been trying to leap away from my own shadow!"

The change that seemed taking place in her befell without warning. It came, though, with much unhappiness and many tears—dumb self-pleadings and expostulations, with withering self-shames, leading, in the end, to a buoyant and electrifying determination. She was no longer a girl. She was a woman, a woman still young in years, yet already with a touch of something autumnal falling about her.

From that time forward, she told herself plaintively, she would have to treasure and cherish and guard, or she would lose what remained of life for her.

Meran came back with his card, and with the news that Dorat was like a tiger encaged. He was tearing his hair out, like a crazy man, storming and pounding and correcting. Truly, declared Meran, this music-making business was a terrible thing.

All the rest of that day Charlotte was oppressed by a sense of loneliness, against which she struggled and fought in vain.

Even Meran took note of her depression of spirits, contrasting as it did with some strange exaltation that shone in the deepened violet-blue of her eyes, and he put a tentative question or two to her, as they made their way together that evening, to the theatre.

"It ought not to hurt a strong man to be lonely, ought it, *cher maître*?" she asked, with her brusque inconsequentiality. "The strong have a right to be lonely!"

Meran groped out to find the trend of her busy thoughts, but no one current defined itself.

"It's different with a woman!" she sighed, as they stepped into the gloomy foyer.

It took Charlotte several minutes to get accustomed to the almost complete darkness of the Opéra House. As she followed Meran to a seat in one of the amphitheatre stalls she felt grateful to him for his hint about wearing her furs. The chill of the place was like the chill of a huge tomb.

A venally officious attendant came up to them noiselessly and slipped a stool under Charlotte's feet. The woman took her *pourboire* from Meran with a curt "*Merci, monsieur!*" and disappeared as noiselessly as she had come. One portable gas-jet flared dismally from the centre of the stage. The gloomy emptiness of the house, the draped chairs and the draped balconies gave Charlotte a sense of phantasmal and subterranean life.

"I feel like a ghost!" she whispered to Meran, close at her side.

"But imagine it all this time to-morrow night!" he whispered back to her.

Out of the blackness the glare of the footlights suddenly shot up. Shadowy musicians, with instruments under their arms, seemed drifting out from some still more shadowy underworld. They took their places at the music-desks, where, at a touch of the hand, a shaft of light flashed down on the white score-sheets. An occasional muffled laugh and the sound of a whisper or two echoed up through the emptiness.

Down in the orchestra a few straggling musicians had begun to tune their instruments. At one time Charlotte counted four different players running brokenly over certain passages of the score. The result was medley, raucous cacophony. It was like life and love unharmonized, she thought to herself. Then there was a little silence, and clear and low the flute-player went over a passage that rang out sweetly solemn through the dark house.

"That's the love-phrase of Leander," explained Meran. "But of course you know it!"

Charlotte gasped; no, she did not know it, and as her attention went back to the limpid, beautiful notes she heard Meran saying that it was a scrap Dorat had just added.

Charlotte looked at the stage again, for the first of the singers were coming in leisurely, in furs and coats and walking-costumes. They stood about in groups, under a dome of dreariness. Toward the back of the stage a pile of upturned canvas trees made a seat for some of the men. Others stood about the solitary table, near the one flaring gas-jet. Charlotte wondered if, amid such dreary surroundings, they could put their hearts into their songs. There was no illusion, no spur to inspiration and effort. It did not seem like art to her; it seemed the most sordid of matter-of-fact labor.

Then came a sudden lull in the stage commotion. It was Dorat who had entered.

"See, there's Dorat, to the right," said Meran.

But she had already caught sight of him, and had seen how pale and tired-looking he was. She noticed, too, that his throat was muffled in a black silk scarf.

It thrilled her, momentarily, to behold how the entrance of her husband altered the entire complexion of the little groups. They smiled and saluted and clustered about him; they waited and grew silent. He was a master entering his hall, a king entering his kingdom.

He acknowledged the salutations curtly; then he carefully put down his hat, inverted, on the table beside the one flaring gas-jet, next to the prompter's desk.

There was a half-whispered conference with the stage-manager, a cry for more lights, and a peremptory word passed round to the waiting artists.

Then the idle groups took on movement and meaning; they formed themselves into compacter form. The musicians seated themselves in their chairs. There was a sudden rustling of paper as they turned over the pages of their music and the conductor nimbly mounted to his seat and caught up his baton. Persons from still another unknown underworld crowded to the wings and peeped out. The performance was about to begin, from the first.

It was on Dorat, Charlotte noticed, that every eye seemed bent. He, it appeared, was the one vital and controlling heart of all that involved machinery of song. It was at a curt nod from him that the baton moved and the music struck up.

Charlotte sat listening, with her chin in her hand. At first, waves of white light seemed passing between her and the stage, and a sense of the unreality of it all overwhelmed her. Then, little by little, the music asserted its claim and caught her ear and held it. It was only scattered fragments of it, she told herself miserably, that were familiar to her.

"Ah, that was a phrase!" cried Meran, as the baton went down, and the conductor's eye turned to Dorat, and singers and players alike tacitly waited for his approving nod.

Then out of the silence that followed a series of rich harmonics, a voice, ravishingly sweet, beautiful in tone, a woman's voice, freighted with feeling and passion, began to sing the first melody.

It was the voice of Beauharnais. Her eyes were fastened on Dorat as she sang, as though it were into his heart alone she was pouring the torrent of her lyric emotion.

The composer listened with bent head, one hand behind his ear. He raised this hand suddenly and beat a slightly slower tempo. Both Beauharnais and the orchestra responded at once to the half-imperious and wholly imperative motion.

As the song swept up to its climactic end Charlotte instinctively waited for the applause which she felt was to follow.

There was not a sound; the conductor waited interrogatively, the musicians looked from one to another and said nothing.

Then Dorat's voice broke the silence that reigned over the quiet stage.

"That is better, mademoiselle, much better! But for the love of God, put a little more feeling into that fourth line!"

He motioned for her brusquely; his voice was crisp and passionless. Charlotte gasped, in sympathy for the woman. Then it was not all the beauty and glory and triumph which it seemed, this art of theirs!

Beauharnais, with a nervous little step, came tearfully to the table where the open score lay. Dorat was beating time with his forefinger and humming the part to her, under his breath, and he stamped his foot on the stage, to mark the stress. She nodded contritely, resumed her place, the musicians once more struck up the prelude, and again she sang the song.

At the end Dorat clapped his hands abstractedly, penciled a hurried note

or two on his score, and made a sign for the movement to go on.

"That is what we must have!" he said, in an afterthought, turning to Beauharnais.

There was one picture that haunted Charlotte's mind as she watched the figure with the muffled throat imperiously dictating and arresting and restarting the movement of that complex machinery. It was the vision of a frail and sandy-haired young boy on the back of a rawboned canal horse, doggedly yet dreamily driving the beast along its sullen way under a cold Canadian sky.

The transition from the one world to the other had meant much. It had meant privation and struggle and sacrifice, it had meant courage and strength and loneliness. Her own life—so guarded and shrouded and upholstered, so soft and purposeless and unsatisfied—how different it had been from his!

"I understand him at last," her heart was whispering to her, as she sat through the long hours there, listening. "I can know and feel for him now, for his aims, his music, his final end beyond all the accidents of life, for that something we women so seldom have come into our own lives!"

It was not the enemy of love, she told herself; it was that something which alone in life, without love, made the world hard and cruel and mean. She, as his wife, was his solace, his comforter. These beings who were now clustered about him, who had seemed so close and intimate to him, were only his tools. They were his performers, to be praised or upbraided as they did well or ill.

She was this great man's wife; she was his comrade and counselor; it was to be her duty and honor and pride, during all the rest of her life, to make scrupulous amends for that wasted Winter of her discontent, to atone rigorously for a life and aim misunderstood. But would she be able to win him back? she demanded of herself, with a sharp little intake of her breath.

Meran, who had been studying her

intent face in the dim light, ventured one sentence into her ear.

"You must look after him!" he said, with a nod toward the stage.

"I?" she said, with a quivering little mirthless laugh, "what can I do?"

"He will need a woman's care after this!" said the man at her side.

She looked down at the white-faced figure muffled about the throat with the silk scarf. He was mopping his brow prosaically, after prosaic battle.

"And tomorrow the world will discover him," added the grizzled old artist, as he buttoned his coat, for the shadowy musicians were once more disappearing into their shadowy underworld.

Charlotte did not answer. But she and her world, she told herself, had discovered him that night.

XV

LIKE most of this world's triumphs, Dorat's victory with "Hero and Leander" came at a time when he was least ready to welcome it. As is often the case, the thorn outweighed the crown.

At the close of his opera's *première* it could be seen that Dorat was ill, a worn and shattered man. During the rehearsal of the next day he collapsed utterly, and was hurried home in a cab with his physician, childishly protesting that music and opera and everything would go to ruin if it was true that wooden-headed Leoncavallo was to be put in charge of things.

But his protests died away with his strength. For a week, while all Paris was ringing with his name, Charlotte hovered about his bed with a softness of voice and hand that seemed miraculously new to her.

It was, however, neither novelty nor miracle. It was only that one of the disrupting shocks of life had exposed to Dorat's eyes a wider and richer vein of her nature. He watched her meekly, obeyed her dutifully, and found an undreamed-of contentment in the shadow of her guardian shoulder.

Even when his doctor ordered him off to the Riviera for a month he suggested that it be Sicily instead, and made ready to go with only a plaintive last cry or two about the fate of his opera.

"It's my first-born," he told her wistfully. "That's why I worry so much, I suppose!"

As their steamer drew nearer Palermo, and the great limestone mass of Monte Pellegrino could be seen towering above the beautiful city of palm and marble and peace, the thought came home to Charlotte that, turn slowly as they will, the wheels of the gods still ground exceeding fine.

Here was the city she had prayed for; here was the gift she had demanded, had blindly exacted of Fate. And the gods, in their sadly ironic way, had yielded all she had asked for. But they had yielded in their own way and on their own conditions.

Yet after her first week her anxiety passed away. Dorat's strength, in that mild and equable air, soon came back to him. His throat grew stronger; before many days he could speak to her in something more than a whisper.

"Oh, dear and dearest, what a child I make of you!" she said one morning, for even in his convalescence he insisted on having her near him. "Here I am, coaxing and petting, the whole day long!"

She could not help remembering her first distinct impression of him—"something of a boy, a little bit of a baby and a very great deal of a genius!"

"But I never had this sort of thing before," he confessed, with a half-rueful laugh, as he looked from the blue of the Mediterranean to what seemed the more celestial blue of her quiet eyes. They could hear the tinkle of the milk-herd bells, as the pattering little Sicilian goats were hurried through the narrow streets by the mellow-throated drivers.

"Do you know what I was thinking of, that first night of 'Hero and Leander'?" Dorat went on. "Can you imagine where my thoughts were when

they began carrying up those ridiculous roses and big rings of laurel? I was thinking of a thin and scrawny young boy, on the back of a scrawnier canal horse, digging his heels into its ribs, so, and wondering if life would ever hold such a glory, such a day of infinite bliss, as for him sometime to play first fiddle at one of Isadore Larocque's village dances!"

"That was at Lachine, wasn't it?" Charlotte asked.

"Yes, at Lachine! And oh, what an irony there is in things! What an irony there is in the very name! Lachine! Champlain and his men thought it was the road to China—and there it stands, La Chine, still mocking their poor hopes and their memory with its name!"

"It's always that way with life," answered Charlotte.

"Yes, my own, I believe it is. Irony is at the root of everything. It's life giving us the laugh. Why, that very love-song of Hero's, you say all Paris is singing now—can you imagine how that came to me?"

"How?" she asked. A sponge-seller, from the streets below, was calling musically through the morning quietness.

"It came to me those days I was alone, when—when you seemed so—so almost cruel! I was unhappy and lonely and wanted you, and I put it into music. So even your cruelty, you see, can be made into a sort of crown!"

She caught at his hand so contritely, with such dumb eloquence of unhappiness, that he took both her hands in his and kissed them laughingly.

Then they fell to talking about the future, how he hoped to spend half of the year in America—how both Jaroslav and Leoncavallo were trying to make him as America-mad as themselves—how they would send for Meran, as soon as he was himself again, and they should all have a holiday together in the Adriatic—and how they would all go back to Paris and to work again.

Charlotte, coercing herself to follow

him in his mood of hopefulness, told him of her plan for remodeling the entire *bel étage* of their avenue du Bois de Boulogne place, so that he might have a comfortable workroom and library in one. She tried to make a joke of how she would stand on guard before its doors, to keep the world back from him and his work. But through her levity he could detect an undertone of passing solemnity.

"Oh, you American women!" he lamented, with mock gravity. "You are down, and up to breathe again, like a whale! You are always surprising us. We see you blow, and then you are off again!"

"If I *am* a whale," she laughed, as she slipped into his arms, "then it's only here that I ever come up to breathe!"

The sea, that evening, was cerulean in its placid quietness. A great golden moon shone languidly down into the Conca d'Oro, and there was a smell in the air that seemed strangely Aprilian and Springlike to Charlotte. The mild Sicilian night, after the rigorous climate of Paris in Winter, lay about them so balmy and soft and odorous that a feeling of languor, of muffled pensiveness, took possession of her. She wondered if it was mood or memory, and in the end she decided it was a mingling of both.

The thought came to her, as it had so often of late, that she was no longer a girl. Yet, even as that sense of something mysterious and mistral weighed on her, she seemed so full of the joy of living, so eager for the enigmatic future and all it held, that she could have fallen to weeping foolishly.

She turned to whisper something to Dorat, but for the second time she hesitated. Instead she drew him to the open casement, through which the great golden moon shone, and together they sat on the wide window-seat, looking out over the glimmering Mediterranean.

From the music-room of some neighboring villa or hotel sounded the notes of a piano. Someone was playing the Barcarolle of Chopin. They listened,

hand in hand, haunted by a hundred memories.

When the last notes had died away he looked down in her face and smiled. The dusky room still seemed filled and haunted with the harmonics of the dead master's fancy. The very night seemed steeped in passion.

"Dear and dearest, how I love you!" she said, so quietly that it was almost a whisper.

"Weather-vane!" he called her contentedly.

"I have always loved you, Jean," she protested simply, "and I always shall—not so madly, I know, nor so foolishly nor so jealously, but it will be infinitely more!"

The eloquence of silence, in that heart-to-heart intimacy, filled the room for a moment or two.

"You know, my own, how unstable and wayward and wilful I was," she went on, in her course of determined self-humiliation. "I thought it was someone other than ourselves who made life full or empty for us. But now I think I know better. I thought you had cheated me; I thought that love itself was cheating me!"

"I was selfish, I know," he confessed. "But after this it will not come so hard!"

"Work is work, though—it's what makes life!" she persisted. "Oh, Jean, try and learn to forgive me! I was always pampered and spoiled and undisciplined! I was always—"

"No; I am the spoiled one!"

"How can one spoil the queen-bee of the hive? You are the worker, the builder, the one to be fed and watched and cared for—"

He tried to muffle her mouth with his hand lazily. In line and color and spirit it was the loveliest mouth in all the world. But she held the hand between her fingers, bent on unburdening her troubled mind.

"You know," she said, after a little silence, "what I've been thinking all day keeps bringing back to my mind something Uncle Cornelius once told me about his railways. He said that the lines of rails, no matter how firmly

they were nailed and clamped and bolted down to the ties, kept creeping a little, ever so little, month by month—kept creeping and moving along the line of traffic. Well, Jean dear, I've begun to feel that I'm like that! I thought I could anchor myself to my own will! I thought I could hold out against all the forces and influences that sweep through life! But it was only blindness, childishness! I suppose it's because I always looked out on life through plate-glass, because I never saw any deeper into things than our other over-wise and over-rich and over-indulged American girls do! That's why I'm learning so late and so hard!"

"I should have been afraid to say that about your country!" whispered Dorat. She seemed unable to mount to his uplands of indolent happiness that night.

"But now," she went on valiantly, though not without an effort, as the smile about her melancholy red lips deepened and grew more proudly humble, "now I'm not so afraid of life. Something—something has changed it all, Jean, and given it meaning and fulness and purpose!"

She looked at him, vivid and pulsing and timid. But he neither saw nor

understood. Instead, he bent and kissed her hand.

"Oh, don't be so Parisian!" she cried, with a flash of her old spirit. It was only a momentary flash, for when once he had taken her at her word and kissed her on the mouth her old-time timorousness returned to her.

Finally she drew his head down.

"I want to go back to my own people!" she said.

"We shall go, in a year, anyway!" he answered contentedly.

"Oh, before *that*!" she cried. "I couldn't stand being among strangers!"

He looked at her in perplexity. His arm was still close about her.

"You will have to be the artist now, Jean—the beauty-gatherer, the dream-seeker—and I the plain home-body!"

Her restless fingers caught at the lapel of his lounging-coat and drew his ear down to her lips. What she whispered left him, he felt, only a groping and frustrated artist face to face with the complete and mysterious artistry of life.

"Am I no use in the world now?" she cried aloud, weakly, triumphantly, as the tears welled up to her eyes.

"This is the world!" he answered humbly, reverently. "This *makes* the world!"



THE UNFORGIVABLE

By Charlotte Becker

AYE, Love, I could forgive you
That with your subtle art
You stole my joy and laughter,
And broke my wistful heart.

But what is past my pardon
Is that you did not deem
My happiness enough to take,
But robbed me of my dream!

MIGNON

By John G. Neihardt

"BUT, Yellow Fox," I protested, "no man understands them; they do not understand themselves!"

Yellow Fox grunted and smiled, showing a very white set of wolfish teeth. We two were sitting together outside the dance-lodge and, male-like, we had hit upon the topic of woman. The locust-like cadences of the songs and the shuffle of dancing feet within came muffled to us. The scent of boiling beef and the good smoke-tang of wood fires permeated the sultry night air, lifting my not over-civilized fancy back into the spacious star-hung feast rooms of the dead years, where big-boned, brawny fighting men indulged their lust for steaming haunches. The full moon lifted a Rabelaisian face of lusty red above the hills and I saw by its light the eager spirit of the story-teller bright in the eyes of Yellow Fox.

"What they understand I do not know," he began; "I only know I do not understand. And I have traveled far. When I was a young man many strange valleys knew my feet, and from many hilltops my eyes looked forth; for from my first moccasins my feet caught the itch for going. And in many valleys of strange peoples I have lived for little spaces until the feasts were tasteless and the maidens ugly. Then did my moccasins itch my feet again, so that I went forth and sought new feasts, new maidens.

"And I have known many maidens. None of them did I understand—and least of all Mignon. Even tonight something of the soft Summer smell

of her is in my nose, and if I were not old I would walk far, walk far; for the scent is like a voice calling over big waters and many valleys—a voice so far away that the air does not catch it—so thin that it is no sound, but a feeling.

"Have I told you how that a white man came to our lands once and led me on a long, strange trail? It happened so: He was a keeper of many strange men and many horses and many strange animals, and for money he showed these to many peoples—and so grew rich. The man showed me much money; he told me of many new lands and of new peoples; he spoke of feasts; of women that were as dreams. Therefore I felt stronger than ever the itch in my feet—and I went with the man.

"And we came at last to many big tepees where the man kept the strange things that he showed to the people for money. One of his tepees was as big as the village of a tribe—and he had many.

"And I had my place among the strange things, for the white man said: 'You are the wild man that growls like a bear and eats babies. I give you money and you must look very wild and growl much when the boys stick at you with straws!' And this was fun.

"So I stood twice every day fastened to a post by a thong of metal. The people stood about me and stared. I growled; I pulled at the fastenings; I ate raw meat. Many came to see: and when I would have gone back to the lands of my people the white man showed me more money, so that I stayed.

"And we traveled very far with the big tepees. And when we came to Big Salty Water we did not stop there; we crossed it, and were in another land.

"And there was a big village—a very big village. There we stopped, and people came to see me.

"You know that village—Par's—Par's—huh?" asked Yellow Fox, falling momentarily into English.

"Yes, Paris," I corrected; "and you were with Barnum."

"Ah," he assented, speaking his own tongue again; "and it is a village of women that make the eyes glad and the blood quick! I stood many days, growling for the people and eating raw flesh. And, one day, Mignon came. A young man of her own people was with her. They stared and talked much together. Some of their talk I knew, for it was the talk the fur-traders used, and my father's father was a trader for furs. And Mignon made the eyes glad. She was tall for a woman and not thick. The women of my people are short and thick. Her face was very white and her eyes were big and deep—like waters under a shadow.

"And the man made jokes at me that stung like elkhorn whips, for he was thin and looked as one whose blood was half water. I could have choked him with two fingers, like a worm! *Sol!*"

Yellow Fox snapped his fingers viciously.

"And it pleased the young man to shove his fingers into my ribs and laugh. So I grasped his arm very hard. I put his fingers to my mouth. I bit and the blood came. He cried *ow-ow*; then I said to the woman, using what speech of hers I knew: 'Take this baby man of yours away or I will eat him, for I am hungry. But you are good to see; I like you; touch me.'

"And she, wondering that I spoke her speech, touched me. Ah, everything was changed!"

Yellow Fox suddenly passed into a sub-conscious mood. The moon, grown pale with its ascent, illumined

his masterful male features over which I could see the dream of old days flitting like a ghost. The song of the women dancing within arose into a high and tenuous minor of yearning, filling up the momentary gap in the story like a Greek chorus. In the wake of the passing gust of song the voice of Yellow Fox arose, soft, low, musical—the voice of memory.

"Her hands she laid upon me—soft and white and thin they were. She passed them over the muscles of my breast; she stroked my arms. Soft as a mother's touch was hers; like a mother's touch—but I felt a fire burning at her finger-tips that made me wish to fight big men for her and make them bleed and make them groan and make them die, slobbering blood in the dust! Then afterward to take her far away, thrown across my back like a dead fawn; to build a lodge for her in a lonesome place where man's face never was!

"Much hair she had—much hair that hung above her face like a dark cloud upon a white sky in the evening. And it brushed across my breast! I shivered as in a wind that drives the snow before it—and yet I was not cold.

"And then she was gone—swallowed up in the river of people. But not all of her was gone. A smell sweeter than the earth-smell when the Spring rains fall was in my nostrils! A smell that gnawed within me like a hunger—yet I did not wish to eat! A smell of soft white flesh—oh, very soft and white! And now in my old age I call that smell 'Mignon.'

"And the people like a noisy, muddy stream flowed round me, past me. But I growled no more for fun. I hated them—they stunk! An ache like the ache for home was upon me; an ache like the ache of a man who smells the home-smoke in a dream and wakes far off from home.

"Two sunlights passed—and in the evening I stood under many lights, bound with the iron thongs, and the noisy stinking stream of people was about me. Their staring eyes were as many bugs that swarmed about and

stung me. I strained at the iron thongs; I hurled the black curses of my people among them—and they were pleased. But this was no play; I wished to rush among them and walk upon them, for I had seen and now no longer could I see.

"But suddenly the smell came back! It grew up like the smell of Spring when the ice makes thunder in the rivers and the flowers come out! And she was there!

"I forgot the people! I was no longer angry. I was in a big lonesome prairie with the sunlight and the singing winds, and she was with me; and all the air seemed soft and cool as when a black-winged rain-cloud shuts out a day of heat. I can feel her hands upon me yet."

Yellow Fox sighed. A passionate outburst of song from the dancers within filled the quiet night with sounds of longing, through which the cowhide drums throbbed feverously like a heart.

"And the words she spoke were soft—they made me wish to shout the mating songs of my people. They made me very strong. Then I learned her name—Mignon.

"*Mignon! Mignon!* Such a sound the Spring winds make among the first leaves. And yet—it is not all a sound—it is part a smell.

"And after that she came often—every evening she came, like a south wind blowing over prairies sweet with rain at sunset. Many things she asked me and I told her many things. I made with my mouth a picture of my own lands; and some of it she put down in a little book, and some she only drank with all her face, as though she was thirsty.

"And they who had traveled far with us—the pitchers of the tepees and the keepers of the animals—laughed softly in passing, showing their teeth in mirth—for were they not jealous?

"And one night she did not come. And it happened upon that night that the big tepees were folded up for another trail, and in the morning we were far away. My breast cried out for her.

My nose longed for that smell which was Mignon.

"So I spoke of her to the pitchers of the tepees; they laughed very loud and long, sending forth breaths that stunk as they laughed. They said bad things of Mignon. They said, 'Can you not understand? She is one of those that her people have cast out!' And this made my breast cry out for her again, for was not I also alone? Were not my own people far away? But the rest of it I knew to be another white man's lie! One liar I struck very hard in the teeth, and when he got up from the dust, toddling like a baby, he laughed no more and said no more bad things of Mignon. And was that not proof that he had lied? Is the first earth-smell of the Spring bad? Had not many maidens of the prairies longed for me, and were they not good? Was I not big and of heavy muscles? Was I not young and good for the eyes of women? Since I am old and much withered I can say this; for I have become another man."

The song of the women singers within had ceased with a wailing diminuendo, but the sullen drums kept up a throbbing snarl. At length the voice of Yellow Fox continued in a low monotone:

"We stopped in many big villages; and my breast was sick. More and more I wished for the prairies. At night I heard the dry winds singing in the grasses. I spoke no more of Mignon, for I was afraid to hear the laughter of the pitchers of the tepees. One more laugh would have made my eyes blind with blood and I would have killed. I lost the wish to eat; I grew shadow-thin. So the owner of the tepees said, 'This wild man is dying for a sight of his prairies; I will send him back.' I traveled far, and again I was in my own land. I saw the hills; I smelled the smoke of the fires of my people. But this no longer filled me. I had seen and now no longer could I see.

"And the Winter came. I sat alone much, and as I sat alone I had big thoughts. I said, 'This that I have

seen was a dream thing; it is gone, and I cannot find the sleep-trail that leads to it again. Therefore I will be as others are; I will take a woman of my own people. I will eat again and I will laugh—for this dream has only made me thin.'

"And so I made a young woman glad; I took her into my lodge. But ever through the time of driving snows I smelled the smell of Spring. *Mignon! Mignon!* I heard the rain winds singing in the first leaves. *Mignon! Mignon!* I heard the sighing of Summer waters. *Mignon! Mignon!* It was half a sound—half a smell—dream sound—dream smell—so thin—so thin.

"And the time came when the big swift arrows of the geese flew northward, spreading softness as of many campfires in all the air; and the river wakened and shook itself, shouting with a hoarse voice into the south. The green things came, and there was a singing of frogs where the early rains made pools. The smell which was Mignon breathed up out of the earth; the sound which was Mignon lived in the trees and grasses. And then the time came when it is no longer the Spring and not yet quite the Summer.

"One evening I sat before my lodge smoking and thinking big thoughts. And the sun was low. A dust-cloud grew far down the road that twisted like a yellow snake toward the village of the white men. It was a wagon coming. It grew big; a white man was driving it. It came near; there was a woman in it. I stared very hard; I rubbed my eyes, for what I saw was as though it had grown up out of my pipe-smoke.

"The woman was tall and not thick. Much hair she had—much hair that hung above her face like a black cloud upon a white sky in the evening. And in all the air about there grew a smell sweeter than the earth-smell when the Spring rains fall. I sat very still. I did not wish to frighten the dream away. And the woman came toward me with much rustling of garments like the speaking of green

leaves in the wind or the thin, small drumming of raindrops.

"Then—between the puffing of two smoke rings—the Spring had grown big and was the Summer. It was Mignon! It was Mignon!"

Yellow Fox lifted his wrinkled face to the full moon and his voice was raised to a poignant cry as he uttered the word that was half sound, half smell. Then for some time he brooded with his chin resting in his hands, while the women singers within filled the heavy air with wailings. At length he sat up and leisurely filled his pipe. His face had become a wrinkled mask again. He smoked a while, then passing the pipe to me he continued, and his voice was thick as though he still breathed smoke:

"After the snows have run away the earth-smell rises and all living things grow drunk with it. The he-wolf sniffs it; he forgets his last year's mate; he takes another and forgets. The air and the earth and the water are filled with new loves, and nothing is ashamed.

"It was so.

"When the next sunlight came I made ready for the trail. I rolled up my tepee. All the while my woman stared upon the woman who had come, and her eyes were sharp with hate. I called in my ponies from the grazing places. I hitched a pony to the drag. I put upon the drag the tepee and the food and the little box that Mignon brought with her—a box of many garments—garments that made songs when she walked, like the songs of rain in the leaves.

"I lifted Mignon upon the drag-pony's back, and we rode away on the Summer trail. I heard my woman wailing in the lodge, but a spirit led me on—the spirit that calls the green things out in the Spring—the spirit that whispers into the ear of the sleeping river and makes it leap up and shout and tear the thongs that bind it—the spirit that makes the wolves cry out in lonesome places that the mate may hear. That spirit went calling down the trail I followed.

"And we came to a place by the river where the hills were high and many leaves made coolness. There I pitched the tepee—and the days were as little flashes of light and the nights were as little shadows. Never before had I found it so good to live. Mignon made songs that laughed and cried, and when she did not sing the rustle of her garments was a song.

"I became as a squaw; I brought the wood and water; I made the fires; I cooked. I was bowed before her; never before had I bowed before anyone. I could not understand. She was so soft and white and of so sweet a smell.

"But the time came when she no longer sang. She grew silent and gazed long each day upon the river. Her hands touched me no more with the touch of soft fire. So I grew kinder still. I spoke soft words. I made sweet sounds to call her. But she frowned upon me and pushed me away. And my breast ached much; so I said to her: 'Go back to your baby man! I could break him with my two fingers—*so!*'

"I did not wish her to go; these were words of my ache. But she got up very straight and tall; she swayed like a pine when the wind howls; there was lightning in her eyes; thunder slept in her face; and her hair seemed as a black cloud that blows up angrily out of the hot South.

"She went to the tepee; she made ready to go, and all the while I watched her with fires in my breast. Then she turned on me and spit in my face. 'You are all the same!' she cried.

"I have been struck in the teeth by strong men, but never had I felt so hard a blow. I sat as a man that dreams. I heard the angry song of her skirts as she fled up the back trail. And then I was as one who awakens with a great hunger pinching him and smells raw meat. I leaped up; I ran after her; I meant to kill her. I caught her; I struck her with my fist even as I had struck the man who lied. I put my fingers to her throat and pressed

very hard. I carried her back to the tepee: I thought I had killed her.

"Oh, the smell of her flesh as she lay very still—as though I had stepped upon a flower!

"And then, after a long while when my breast was growing sick, she opened her eyes and looked upon me. Oh, tender, tender were her eyes and full of soft fires! It was the old look, only it was stronger. She raised herself to her knees; she put her arms about my neck; she touched me with her lips; she called me soft names.

"I thought it was a trick—a woman's trick. I pushed her from me. I said, 'You are my squaw—I am hungry! Cook!' And she brought wood and water; she made a fire; she worked for me. All the while her eyes were soft, and often she touched me with fingertips that burned with soft fires.

"I could not understand. When I was kind, then she was not kind. And now, with the blue marks of my angry fingers at her throat, she worked for me, and her eyes were tender for me, her finger-tips were warm for me. I cannot understand."

Yellow Fox took the pipe from my hands and smoked long in silence. He sighed deeply, breathing in big breaths of smoke. At length, growing impatient, I ventured a question: "And what became of Mignon?"

He laid down his pipe and continued in a low voice: "The woman who wailed in the lodge had not forgotten.

"The plums ripened and the flowers that bloomed on the Summer trail were dry and heavy with seed. The hills grew brown, and a grayness like smoke was in the air. The grapes hung thick and purple.

"And it happened one night, when the first small pinch of frost was in the air, that Mignon would sing soft baby songs to me—songs such as the mothers of her people sang, she said. Oh, such soft, low songs! I hear them yet. A kindness was in her face—like that in the face of a young mother. I saw it by the light of the wood-fire that held the frost away. And when

she had sung much, as to a child, she put her hands upon my shoulders and said a strange thing. This is what she said; I remember: 'Sometime I will sing so to another; will you be glad, Yellow Fox?' And I wondered much, for eyes were wet when she said it.

"And that night she fell asleep with her soft hands clutching my arm; and something made me wish to sing. I watched her sleeping and there was an ache in my throat when I remembered the feel of my angry fingers at her neck. And then I slept.

"But in the time when the night is deepest and sleep is like a weight upon the eyes a sharp cry awoke me. I leaped up. The fire was almost dead. I heard the sound of feet flying through the dead leaves into the darkness. One hand felt warm and wet. I raised it to my nose and it was blood. And then I heard a gasping for breath and a sound of gurgling. I placed my hand upon the breast of Mignon—and it was warm and wet.

"I stirred the embers and made a little flame. I looked upon her face and it had the look of death. Eyes that ached she turned upon me. I stopped the blood with torn garments.

I called her soft names and she clutched my fingers. Then she was very quiet. And when the face of the night turned gray she opened her eyes that were hot and dry. With weak hands she drew my ear to her dry lips. She breathed a little broken piece of song—a baby song—a song of the mothers of her people. And when I looked upon her again her face was pinched, her eyes stared."

Yellow Fox lapsed into another prolonged silence. The dancers and singers in the lodge had ceased. A heavy sultry silence filled the night. When he spoke again his voice came very low and muffled.

"I buried her after the manner of my people. I sang the songs of the dead. Above her grave I killed the pony that she rode. And then I rode away upon the trail that was no longer the trail of Summer. But the Autumn winds in the dry grasses sang her name. *Mignon! Mignon!* I heard the rain winds sighing in the first leaves. *Mignon! Mignon!* I heard the sighing of Summer waters. *Mignon! Mignon!* I smelled the smell of Spring. Everywhere it was—*Mignon!*—half sound, half smell—dream sound, dream smell, so thin—so thin!"



FORGE-FLAME

By Aldis Dunbar

THOU who hast wrought into me
Fire of the heart, growing strong—
Thought-vision, eager to see,
Passion to put life in song,

Lest I go—led by a dream—
Grasping the edge of my sword,
Weld these with one gift supreme:
Power to master them, Lord!

THE MIRRORED MYSTERY

By Guy Bolton

THE most natural, because appropriate, surroundings of the evil, the violent or the mysterious are unnatural surroundings. Harmony, even though it be a harmony of horror, gives us less of a shock than crime in discordant relief against a background, familiar, and of peaceful, homely association.

This fact was the first to force itself upon Billy Harrington's disordered consciousness as he picked himself up rather painfully from a recumbent position in the dusty middle of Worsely Road, Lower Hampstead. The snug suburban setting, the garish brilliance of the sun's early rays, his own sense of flushed well-being, had served to emphasize the ghastly incongruity of the scene he had just witnessed; and, indeed, as he started out rather shakily for the police station, he could have believed the whole affair a half-tipsy phantasma had he not been reminded at every step of the painful reality of his bruises.

At the police station he poured forth his tale to the officer in charge—a tall, loose-jointed man slouched in a swivel desk-chair—who listened to the startling recital with the stolidity of habitual boredom.

"This happened, you say, only half an hour ago?"

"Yes, at twenty minutes past six," replied Billy, pulling out his watch, which had stopped opportunely to record the moment of his fall.

"To give you the matter in fuller detail, I had just turned up Worsely Road when I noticed a large touring-car not a great distance in front of me moving slowly, in order, as it appeared,

to keep abreast of a young woman on the opposite pavement. A man, who had been bending over some of the machinery, after a word to the chauffeur, did, in fact, speak to her, but her only response was a glance over her shoulder to see, I felt, if there was anyone to whom she could appeal in case the fellow became persistent in his advances. I had hastened my steps that I might serve her in this way should the occasion demand, when in answer to a signal from the motorist, a hansom, the driver standing up and urging his horse to a gallop, swept by me and slipped in between the motor and the curb on which the young lady was standing."

Both Billy's breathing and his eloquence quickened as he reached the climax of his narrative. It was in strong, glowing phrase that he pictured the abduction: the girl's bewildered terror, her brutal seizure, his own quick spurt forward.

"One of the blackguards had dragged her into the cab, but I managed to land a pretty good one on the other's eye," he continued, with pardonable relish, "and that seemed to please the fellow in the motor immensely. 'Keep it up, Smithers!' he yelled. 'It's great, it's rippin'. There isn't a soul in sight.' But Smithers, if that was the scoundrel's name, seemed only too glad to throw himself on the floor of the cab, while, as it started forward, I, with one hand grasping his collar, managed to gain a foothold on the step. Then, just as I reached out to clutch at the reins, the cabman leaned over and struck me a smart blow on the head with the butt

end of his whip. The pain made me let go my hold—" Billy Harrington paused as though unpossessed of a phrase which would lend adequate dignity to the rather abrupt termination of his adventure.

"And this happened on Worsely Road, just opposite the Tennis Club?" questioned the official. "One of the chaps was a tall man with a reddish beard? The other short and dark?"

Billy's jaw dropped.

"Good God, do you know who they were?"

The officer scrutinized him narrowly.

"Hasn't it struck you yet, young man, that you have been describing the Hyde abduction?"

His words suddenly swept aside the barrier which had held back the accumulation of half-familiar circumstances from flooding Billy's mind with a remembrance of what they suggested.

The abduction of the unfortunate Hyde girl had recently taken place under identical circumstances and on this very spot. The case was, indeed, still absorbing public interest, as the young woman's body, bearing evident marks of violence, had only the week before been washed up on the Blackwell Beach, the story of her death another of those somber mysteries which the narrow stream holds in its inviolable secrecy. The few ascertainable facts had, nevertheless, been pieced together from various sources, the gaps being filled by the ready young men of the sensational press. But this brought the police no nearer the discovery of who those two men were that had forced the girl into their hansom that foggy evening at Hampstead, and with whom she had been seen late the following night crossing the Vauxhall Bridge. Nor could they discover the identity of the young man whom—investigation had fairly well established—the pretty lady's maid had attempted to blackmail with such direful results to herself.

"I had not thought of it before, but it is a remarkable coincidence," Billy replied at length, recalling himself from the new labyrinth of speculation into

which the inspector's remark had plunged him.

"Most remarkable," agreed the policeman, scribbling abstractedly on the blotter.

"Well, are there any questions you would like to ask me?" said Billy, impatient at the other's lack of energy.

"Yes," replied the official slowly. "You said you had been at a dinner of the Literary Journalists' Club, I think."

"Precisely."

The inspector raised his eyes and surveyed the battered individual before him.

"The dinner began, I suppose, some time before midnight, and you were on your way home from there at half-past five this morning. About how many glasses of gin-and-soda do you suppose you drank in that time?"

Billy had been taught in early childhood to count ten before replying to any provocative remark, and in cases of extreme exasperation twice that amount. He now ran the notation up to thirty before observing with some stiffness:

"I see I shall have to take the matter to headquarters myself."

In spite of this assertion, Billy had decided by the time he emerged once more into the sunshine that to take such a step in his present condition would be merely courting further humiliation. The story he had to tell was far from being the most plausible explanation of his bedraggled appearance. It was, indeed, he admitted, a most unlikely story. No, he would go home, change his clothes, bathe his poor head, and consult Gibbs. Gibbs's mental processes were as irregular as his features, but the conclusions he reached by these devious and erratic paths were those of a Solon.

Billy found this gentleman, who shared with him the cost and comforts of some pleasant apartments overlooking the Heath, engaged with what he was wont to term "the business of breakfast"; and after a few cogent remarks on the giant proportions of the meal as evidenced by a crushed pha-

lanx of eggshells, the young editor attempted to draw his friend into the study.

"Softly, softly, lad! One swallow no more makes a breakfast than it does a Summer," protested Gibbs, as he reached for the marmalade.

Denied an undivided attention, Billy supplemented the meal's discussion with the relation of his appalling adventure. When he had finished the elder man lit a cigarette and, leaning back, blew some ruminative clouds of smoke ceilingward before delivering his opinion.

"In the first place, Billy," he said at length, "you may make up your mind as to the uselessness of trying to interest people of ordinary intelligence in your story. Their verdict would be the same as that of the chap at the Hampstead police station. That is to say, the more charitable ones would think that you really fancied you saw the affair as you describe it, and would account for the hallucination by a collision with the lamp-post, a roll in the gutter and a journalistic imagination which had recently been deeply engrossed with the details of the Hyde atrocity. The person of ordinary intelligence would not see, as I do, that, though a literary man, you have no imagination at all, and that what they and you mistake for it is merely a marvelous capacity for inaccuracy. All of which is to show you that while I believe the actual occurrence to have been somewhat as you describe, there will be no use in trying to convince anyone of so very ordinary a degree of intelligence as a Scotland Yard official. If any steps are to be taken in the matter—and of course there can be no two opinions about that—the whole responsibility is, in the transatlantic phrase, 'up to you.'"

Billy was more impressed by his counsellor's easy summary of the situation than he cared to show.

"What the devil good is it to saddle me with the business when my head feels like an overripe pumpkin?" he complained fretfully.

"That fact," responded Gibbs,

"though no doubt regrettable on your own account, should be, so far as it concerns the young woman who was kidnapped, a subject of hearty congratulation. For, I gather, had you felt more yourself you would have thought it unnecessary to seek assistance from the superior intellect of Christopher Gibbs. No, my dear Billy, your part is that of Watson—a rôle in which a head like an overripe pumpkin, to use your own graphic term, is far from being out of place. As for myself, while working in general on the lines laid down by the great detective, I shall endeavor to apply the methods he uses with cigar-ashes and trousers-knees to the human factors themselves. And now, if you will take another glass of soda and get your hat, we will commence our investigation."

That he had decided on a plan of action so soon was somewhat of an astonishment to Billy, who had pictured Gibbs when he spoke of following the methods of Sherlock Holmes as spending the rest of the day cross-legged on the hearth-rug while he silently ruminated in a thick cloud of tobacco smoke, but he endorsed none the less heartily his friend's suggestion, which was to visit a French pastry-cook named Emile Davot, whose shop was on High street, a few doors from Worsely Road.

"They must have passed there," explained Gibbs, "after you saw them turn the corner. And it is most likely that such a cavalcade at that hour would attract the notice of someone in the shop, which was the only place in the immediate neighborhood, I suppose, open at so early an hour."

Whatever misgivings Billy may still have felt as to the soundness of his friend's deductions, he wisely kept to himself—a fact of which he was not a little glad when they discovered that not only were they on the right track, but that the amount of information Emile Davot could give them exceeded their most sanguine expectations.

The two vehicles, it appeared, had swung around the corner while Emile was himself placing a trayful of loaves

in his little delivery cart. He had noticed the car particularly because it was a French one—from the long, narrow chassis he judged a Meteor. He always noticed French cars, as he was collecting statistics to prove to a friend that there were more of them used in London than those of native manufacture. But this time there had been something to distract him from a patriotic contemplation of his country's commercial preëminence. In the hansom driving wheel to wheel with the motor a lady was struggling between two men.

Without any lesser degree of sympathy for the unfortunate girl, Billy could not repress a sigh of relief at hearing his story thus corroborated. Now, whatever the outcome, Gibbs could not impugn the flesh and blood reality of their quarry.

The little Frenchman went on to explain that he was just on the point of rushing out to the rescue when something happened to make him think it all in fun. The man in the motor had leaned over and addressed the occupants of the hansom. Emile had been unable to hear what he said, but it had the effect of immediately putting an end to their struggles. The motor had then shot ahead, the occupant of the rear seat turning as it did so and calling back to the others. So far as Emile could remember he had said something about not waiting, adding apparently as explanation, "We've got to stop in up here."

Having gathered so much by cross-questioning, Gibbs waited impatiently while Billy explained to Emile the necessity of keeping the matter quiet at present.

"If these scoundrels should learn that they are being tracked," he said, "the poor young woman's life would, I fear, be worth but little."

"*C'est comme un chapeau de Gaboriau*," commented the little Frenchman in a thrilled whisper. "Ah—h," he added thoughtfully, "dere is one ting dat might 'elp. Dat *cocher*—he come, I tink, from de 'Am'stead station."

"I should say it *would* help!" cried Gibbs enthusiastically. "Here's a half crown, Emile. You must drink a bottle of wine to our success, and if you think of anything more that might help us you will find it worth your while."

"And where now?" asked Billy, as his friend led the way up High street after leaving the shop.

"We are going," answered Gibbs, "to the repair-shop at which Emile overheard the man in the motor say he would have to stop."

Billy turned an astonished countenance to his companion.

"Repair-shop? I didn't hear anything about a repair-shop."

"Neither did I," replied Gibbs impatiently, "but to what other place that is open at six in the morning would they be likely to go? You see," he went on more judiciously, "if the man had had an appointment his confederates would probably have known it. And then his saying 'We have to stop,' thus including his chauffeur, still further supports my theory."

"But neither are repair-shops open at six o'clock," objected Billy.

"True, my sapient Watson, not ordinary repair-shops. If they were, it might take us some time to find the right one. But the repair department at the barns of the Metropolitan Motor-Traction Company is never closed."

Awed by such an exhibition of sagacity Billy forbore from further utterance until they reached the Motor-Traction Company, where they entered through the larger building used for storing busses, into a long, narrow shed down one side of which stood a number of private motors. Gibbs walked along the line, carefully scrutinizing each machine.

"A Meteor," he pondered, "a Meteor with a red body, upholstered in green leather. How do I make that out, my dear Billy? Because there is the car."

Billy laughed.

"It is not a bad guess, for I remember now it *did* have a red body. But it's rather a favorite color, and I

shouldn't be surprised if you found another Meteor answering to that description in this very shop."

"Your forensic ability has been wasted, Billy. Your portrayal of Sherlock's biographer is amazingly lifelike. But I must not let you outdo me. I have discovered that this car came in comparatively a short time ago, because, as you notice, there are condensation drops on the exhaust pipe; but the car is not splashed with mud, as it inevitably would be if it had come in since the streets were watered. This street, from its appearance, was very thoroughly watered not more than two hours ago. Now, even you will not, I think, stretch the long arm of coincidence so far as to suggest that *two* Meteors with red bodies came in before seven o'clock this morning."

If such incontrovertible logic could need support, it found it in the reluctant admission of the mechanic that the car had indeed been brought in that morning by a gentleman and his chauffeur some time between six and seven.

Gibbs glanced triumphantly at his satellite.

"And now, my man," he said, absently plunging a hand into his pocket, "would you please look up the gentleman's name and address?"

The man looked longingly at the coin.

"I'm sorry, sir, I can't."

Gibbs frowned. "It will be all right. I'll explain to your employers if there is any rule against it."

"Tisn't that, sir," he replied, "but the gentleman didn't leave his name."

"Didn't leave his name?" interposed Billy in consternation. "That's very unusual, isn't it?"

"Yessir, it is, but if you'll excuse me, sir, I think 'e seemed afraid some'un might come inquiring after 'im. 'E said I wasn't to say anything about 'im if I was arst."

As further inquiry added to their knowledge merely the fact that the chauffeur was to stop in on the following day, they turned toward the sta-

tion, hopeful that their second clue might lead them to the girl without such jeopardizing delay. Their first inquiries met with but little success, the other cabbies on the stand offering to drive them anywhere they might wish to go. It was not until the astute Gibbs dropped a hint of his having a complaint against the man, and gently rattled the coins in his pocket, that tongues loosened. Mr. Richard Blodgett, license number 31760, was evidently not popular.

"And he hasn't been back since this morning?" eagerly queried Gibbs, as he noted the address in his pocket-book.

"No," replied their bleary-eyed informant, with some show of virtuous indignation, "'an' it's my erpinion 'e's drinkin' 'is blarsted 'ead off somewhere with the tips they give 'im."

"Probably," replied Gibbs; "but we'll take a trip to Kentish Town. His wife will, I think, know his favorite resort."

"Then, sir," said the cabman reflectively, "you'll likely meet the other gent as was inquirin' after 'im."

"Someone *else* inquiring for him?" cried Gibbs and Billy in a breath.

"Yes, sir, not arf an hour ago."

"What did he look like?"

"It wasn't very easy to see, sir. 'E 'ad a long black coat on, turned up at the collar, an' a wide slouch hat pulled over 'is eyes. 'E was some sort of a furriner, I think."

"And he went to Kentish Town?"

"Yes, sir. Leastways 'e walked down the steps to the station, sir, an' 'asn't come up since."

Gibbs did not wait to hear more, but seizing his friend's arm hurried down to the platform. The booking-clerk informed them that a train had left twenty minutes before, the next being due in about a quarter of an hour.

"Thirty-five minutes ahead of us," cried Gibbs, swinging impatiently up and down the platform.

"You think it was one of them?"

"Undoubtedly. The fellow's tremendous eagerness to see Blodgett immediately would alone assure us of

that. There has evidently been some hitch in their arrangements, or, perhaps, something that would incriminate them was dropped in the cab during the struggle this morning."

Once aboard the train, it was but a short time before they reached Kentish Town, that grimy, densely-built arm of the city which is dyked back from the green stretches of the heath by the narrow walls of Highgate and Lower Hampstead; but it required both inquiry and search to find the obscure address to which they were directed. It was, therefore, a most welcome surprise to learn from Mrs. Blodgett that she had just watched the mysterious foreigner board a north-bound train after his second call in search of her husband.

Without waiting to satisfy her anxiety concerning these persistent inquiries, Gibbs grabbed his disciple by the arm and, running the short distance to the Kentish, Town Road, swung onto a passing tram.

"We must get a hansom as soon as we can see one," he panted, as he peered from side to side, "only there aren't likely to be any in this hole."

They espied one, however, in a few minutes and quickly changed vehicles.

"Drive at a good brisk pace and keep close to the tramway," were Gibbs's instructions, and in a moment they were bowling swiftly along, threading the intricate maze of traffic under the inimitable guidance of the London cabby.

They passed several north-bound trams, but the two young men leaning eagerly forward could discern no figure that resembled the dark scoundrel they were seeking. Their task, too, was becoming increasingly difficult. The exceptionally clear morning was followed, as it so frequently is in the latter part of the year, by a light drizzle which, pressing down the smokes and vapors of the city, turned them gradually to a fog of ever-growing density.

Just as they were beginning to realize how heavy were the odds against their success, the back of another tram became faintly visible a short distance

ahead of them and Billy, who was on the side nearest it, peered rather apathetically into the dimly lighted vehicle. As he did so, his heart gave a sudden bound and he gripped his friend's knee excitedly.

"Look, Gibbs—in the far corner all muffled up!"

There could, indeed, be no doubt about it. Here was the short, thick-set figure sunk into the long coat, a low-drawn slouch hat shadowing the black-bearded face.

Gibbs raised his arm and pushing back the strap told their driver to keep close to the tram.

"Don't you think we ought to get aboard?" questioned Billy anxiously.

"My dear Billy, like all minor strategists, you make the mistake of not crediting your opponent with any greater perspicacity than you possess yourself. It is not at all impossible that the fellow might recognize you, and my hope is that he may be leading us to the place where they have immured the girl. We will follow him and see."

With this idea in view they allowed the man to alight without interference, and paying off their cab they started after him. He led them up the Heath Road until he came to Worsely Road, where he turned westward. Billy nudged his comrade as he noticed the fellow pause when he reached the scene of the crime and gaze across the road. He continued on his way at a brisk pace and then suddenly turned the corner into High street.

"You see," whispered Gibbs, "he's going just the same way they went this morning."

When they rounded the angle, however, they saw to their consternation that he had disappeared. Gibbs started forward on a run, and was just passing Davot's shop when he saw their quarry stooping down in the doorway that led to the rooms on the upper floor. Without a moment's hesitation Gibbs seized him and with the help of Billy, who had hastened to his assistance, laid the fellow, kicking and struggling, on his back in the

middle of the pavement. In the scuffle the broad-brimmed hat was knocked off, and the light from the pastry-cook's window fell full on the man's face. The bewildered countenance looking up at them was that of Emile Davot himself.

"Ah—h!" he said, with a long-drawn sigh of relief, "it ees only some of the young gentlemen's games, ees it? I 'ave been trying to deescovair somet'ing more for you, but it has been wit'out moch success."

"I should say it had, damn you!" cried Gibbs when he had at length mastered his utterance. "You've managed to waste several precious hours of our time, which we should have spent in hunting for the cabman."

"I 'af, at least, found 'is name and address for you."

"Yes," retorted Gibbs, turning from him in disgust, "and a fine chance there is now of our finding him. These scoundrels, who seem to have ample means, will take care that no evidence is left behind."

As they turned and mechanically retraced their steps, Billy, who seemed to have obediently shifted the whole responsibility upon the broader shoulders of the appropriately named Christopher, could not suppress a smile at the ridiculous figure they had cut in the tracking and seizure of their rival investigator.

"The way the little beggar followed our cautions of secrecy was to muffle himself up like a stage villain."

Gibbs did not reply. He could see no humor in the affair at all, for he had so far tasted the sweets of success as to find defeat a very bitter pill, indeed. But he was determined not to accept defeat yet.

They repaired once more to the station. Their previous informant was off with a fare, but several other cabbies were eager to vouchsafe information which might possibly be regarded as of value.

"Yes, Dick came back," said one, "an' when we tol' 'im that three gents 'ad been looking for 'im 'e inquired wery pertickler as to what they looked

like. We couldn't get 'im to stay around 'ere, though. 'E said 'e 'ad another job tonight."

Gibbs turned to Billy.

"Did you hear that? They are going somewhere tonight. I'm afraid we shall be too late."

There was one more chance, and they took it. At the motor repair-shop they were informed that the chauffeur had stopped in and taken away the motor that afternoon.

"But I thought he wasn't to call for it; in fact, that it wouldn't be ready until tomorrow?"

The man they had seen in the morning had left for the night, but the engineer in charge of the shop looked up the matter in his order-book.

"The work was to be finished and called for today," he said. "It was only a small repair."

The two young men gazed at each other for a moment.

"Checkmate," said Gibbs.

In truth, it was a dejected pair that sat down to a supper of cold viands laid out by their housekeeper. Although they had forgotten lunch, and Billy's breakfast had been purely a nominal affair, neither of them displayed much appetite.

"They are a pretty clever lot," said Gibbs, breaking a long silence without feeling the necessity for a more definite subject than the pronoun, "promising that fellow money, as they no doubt did, if he would tell anyone inquiring for them that the work on their car would not be finished until tomorrow."

But Billy did not reply. It is doubtful if he even heard his friend's remark. He was gazing forward dreamily, with that look of inspiration on his face which was wont to rest there only on Wednesday night, when he sat at his desk penning the masterly paragraphs of his weekly leader.

"Gibbs," he said suddenly, shortening his vision to the material world, so ably symbolized by the rotund person of his friend, "Gibbs, I have an idea."

"Put it in your note-book then,"

growled Gibbs. "It will probably have to last the magazine for several months."

"Do you know," Billy went on, unheeding the interruption, "where they are going tonight?"

"Do you suppose I'd be sitting here if I did?"

The light was falling on the young man's rapt face. The eyes looked out from dark rings, which told of sleeplessness and nervous strain, with a prophetic fixity.

"They are going to Vauxhall Bridge," he said.

"Rubbish!" replied Gibbs decidedly.

"Even supposing that they are, for some inexplicable reason, taking precisely the same course that they did in the Hyde case, what proof is there that the last scene of that tragedy was Vauxhall Bridge? That whole story was, in all probability, a fine flight of fancy on the part of one of Mr. Pearson's young men, and its general acceptance testifies merely to the influence of the yellow press and the gullibility of its readers."

"I know," returned Billy doggedly, "but I am convinced, I have an intuition—if you'll allow me to borrow feminine phraseology—that tonight, after these cold-blooded scoundrels have drugged the girl as they did Bessie Hyde, they will attempt to do away with her somewhere in the vicinity of Vauxhall Bridge."

"Attempt?"

"Yes," said Billy. "They will not succeed if I can help it."

Gibbs walked to the window and, raising the blind, gazed out into an atmosphere choked with fog, through which the dim halo that marked the street-lamp opposite was barely visible.

"Billy," he said, after a moment's hesitation, "you're not going down to Vauxhall."

"And why not, may I ask?"

"Because you haven't had a wink of sleep for over thirty-six hours and wouldn't be good for anything if you went there. No, you are to go straight to bed and set the alarm-clock for two o'clock. I don't believe

a penn'orth in your intuition, but I'll go down to Vauxhall and hang around till you come, just for the satisfaction of proving what a fantastic young idiot you are."

Billy's rather half-hearted expostulations making little way against the other's sturdy obduracy, he at length gave in; but when he had thrown himself on the bed, despite his extreme exhaustion, sleep strove in vain to quell the clamorous speculations which filled his mind concerning this dual crime, the task of solving which had been so strangely thrust upon him.

Once, when he dozed slightly, he had a vivid vision of a girl clinging desperately to the railing of a bridge while two thugs tried to loosen her frantic grasp. Billy, holding tightly to Gibbs's hand, was running toward them at the top of his speed, but without getting a step nearer, while his companion, grinning at him now in the guise of the Red Queen, remarked in that lady's own words: "*Here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run twice as fast as that!*"

He awoke with beads of perspiration on his brow and, striking a match, looked at the clock. It was half-past twelve—he could stand it no longer, and getting up he proceeded to invest himself with cap and great-coat.

He found as he threw open the front door that a wonderful change had occurred in the last three hours. The stars were visible overhead; a strong south wind had dispelled the fog. He imagined he could almost catch in it a whiff of salt from the Thames marshes.

It was nearly two o'clock by the time he reached Vauxhall and found Gibbs pacing up and down on the south side of the bridge.

"I came over here," explained that worthy, "because the policeman on the other side was convinced that I contemplated self-destruction. There is really a lot in this hypnotic suggestion business, after all—by Jove, he has

kept my thoughts on the subject of suicide ever since I've been here."

"Mine were on the subject of murder while I was trying to sleep, so perhaps the change will not be for the worse."

"Well, let your thoughts be as thrilling as you please," rejoined Gibbs. "It's the only excitement you'll get, though; if you're sensible, you'll come home with me. You won't catch anything down here except a bad cold."

Billy shook his head.

"I know it's damnably idiotic, but I'm going to stay. I see as well as you do that there isn't much likelihood of anything happening now the fog has lifted, but logical method having failed I'm going to give illogical intuition a good chance."

The relieved sentinel shrugged his shoulders; at any rate there was no reason for further self-sacrifice on his part. Gibbs the materialist could seek his bed without further interference from his higher nature.

To Billy in his spent condition the dragging hours that followed with their morbid, darkness-bred visions made up a picture worthy the wild imagination of Gustave Doré. As he leaned wearily on the parapet, watching the dark water that had been the Lethean tide of so many despairing souls flow from under the cavernous arch of the bridge, he did not wonder that Gibbs's thoughts had clung to the theme of self-immolation. He started from his gloomy musings every now and then as he caught the sound of wheels—interruptions that became more frequent as the night wore on. Wagons laden with produce from the Surrey farms rolled over the bridge, bound for Covent Garden and the West End markets.

At length, however, the east began to turn a welcome gray, slashed presently with long streaks of vivid color that threw into sordid relief the stunted, smoke-wrapped wilderness of Kennington and Bermondsey, while on the other side the first rays of the sun lighted like thin torches the tops of the Abbey towers, and struck dazzling

reflections from an occasional leaded pane in the great mullioned windows of the Houses of Parliament.

It was in a very different mood that Billy watched this sunrise from that in which he had viewed the dawn of the previous day. His long, weary wait had been for nothing, and he could take no further steps to solve the mystery or to prevent another crime if it had not already been committed. He was completely played out; and yet he stayed on, mechanically watching the sun climb from out the bank of mists still lying low on the horizon into an almost cloudless sky. How much longer he may have remained there he could never tell. He was suddenly brought erect by a sound from the north of the bridge. It was the chug-chug of a motor.

The vehicle—a touring-car with a red body—had stopped opposite the Tate Gallery, and the solitary occupant of the rear seat was leaning over addressing a policeman still on beat there. The heavy bluecoat reached out and took something from the other, then, turning, walked up the steps of the Gallery and disappeared around an angle of the building. The motor started forward with a jerk.

So much had aroused Billy's attention. There was something strangely familiar in the fact that the chauffeur's companion was bent over the adjustment of some of the machinery. Yet it was not that which, suddenly dispelling Billy's lethargy, sent him forward in a lurching, unsteady run. A hansom swept around the corner of Grosvenor Road and was quickly drawn abreast of the motor, which thereupon increased its speed. The young man saw his worst fears realized as both vehicles came to a sudden stop near the middle of the water span, and two men alighted from the hansom supporting between them the inert form of a girl.

Billy, with the awful feeling of his dream that he was unable to shorten the distance between himself and the little group, uttered a hoarse shout. Both wretches turned their heads.

"Hurry up!" called the man in the motor.

Her champion saw now that to render the girl still further helpless she was bound with a heavy rope, each man holding an end with which they dragged her right up to the parapet. Then, gathering his strength for a final spurt, he drove right at the dark, thick-set ruffian nearest him—the one whom they had imagined themselves tracking from Kentish Town the day before.

"Hi, there! Wait a minute, sir!" yelled the cutthroat's employee from the other side of the bridge.

It flashed into Billy's mind how identically the incidents of the morning before were being repeated, as he struck out viciously with his stick at the man in front of him. The fellow dropped on his hands and knees and dove forward, thus managing to elude the sweep of the rescuer's blackthorn. The manoeuvre was well judged. Billy, unable to check his pace, tripped and went sprawling over the other's back, his head striking the stone parapet as he fell.

When the young journalist at length struggled back to consciousness he lay for a long time trying vaguely to solve the problem of why the housekeeper had changed all the pictures and furnishings of his room. Having further satisfied himself that she had also moved his fireplace and added a window on one side, he became annoyed.

"That confounded Gibbs has been having the house altered," he said.

But at that moment his eye caught an alteration that he felt even the shameless Gibbs could not have made—a young woman walked lightly across the room with a vase of flowers in her hand. His brow contracted and he clutched the bedclothes wildly as the whole affair surged back upon his memory.

"Thank God, you're all right, then!" he cried hoarsely.

She hurried to his side.

"I feel more cause to thank Him that you are all right, just at this

moment," she answered, a smile softening the evident anxiety in her face. "But I didn't mean to give you such a shock. I had no idea you were—awake."

Putting his hand helplessly to his head Billy discovered that there was a bandage around it.

"Where am I?" he asked faintly.

"In my brother's house in Grosvenor Road. I told them to bring you here after your accident, because it was nearer than a hospital, and we didn't know then where you lived. We found out afterwards from your cards, and Mr. Gibbs has called every day."

"Why, have I been here long?"

"Only three days—but you mustn't talk now."

"I must know one thing. Were those blackguards caught?"

"Yes," she rejoined soothingly; "they hadn't time to get away."

But though Billy's tongue was obediently silent, his brain ran wild with questions and speculations. Why was there on the lovely, earnest face of his nurse no trace of the terrible ordeal through which she had passed? How did she happen to be his nurse? The last question was answered to his disappointment when the uniformed functionary returned from her afternoon walk and turned the young lady, whom she addressed as Miss Connover, out of the room. But in spite of sick-room discipline, Billy managed to see a good deal of his hostess during the week before he crawled, with Gibbs's assistance, into a cab and drove back to his own rooms.

While he delicately refrained from again alluding to Miss Connover's terrible experiences, he was devoured with natural curiosity—a curiosity which Gibbs, to his great annoyance, refused to gratify, finally enjoining the convalescent to take the whole affair with him to his ultimate destination in a condemned hereafter. Gibbs's manners were certainly not improving, and Billy, assuming in turn the dignified mantle of silence, drew comfort from the conclusion that the mighty Sher-

lock's impersonator was jealous of his understudy's success.

As it happened, the day following their altercation the doctor removed his name from the invalid list, and Billy's first use of his freedom was to call upon the Connovers. Miss Connover came down attired in hat and coat.

"I wonder," she said, "if you will go over to the Agricultural Hall with me? We won't stay long, but part of the entertainment is conducted by my brother, and I should like you to see it."

Billy felt that he would much rather be entertained by Miss Connover herself, but as she had taken his acquiescence for granted he could only express himself delighted.

"What is your brother going to do? Something on the monologue order?" he asked as they settled themselves in a four-wheeler. With conscious delicacy he had rejected a hansom.

"Oh, no! He is the manager of the Baldwin-Connover Biograph Company. He invented this particular type of apparatus."

Billy's fondness for motion pictures was not great, and while the canvas exhibited a bald old gentleman's struggles with a blue-bottle, a daring Raffles robbery, and the like, he surreptitiously studied the profile of the young lady at his side. Looking up mechanically during a momentary intermission, he saw with a start the announcement on the screen in heavy black capitals:

HYDE ABDUCTION AND MURDER SHOWING THE ATTEMPTED RESCUE

The buzz of expectation easily covered Billy's ejaculation; and then all eyes were riveted on the solitary figure of Bessie Hyde outlined against the background of high wire fence surrounding the Hampstead Tennis Club. Billy grasped the back of the seat in front of him and leaned eagerly forward to get a better view, but at that moment a hansom dashed into the picture and two men sprang out and

seized the girl. Every detail was so fixed in Billy's mind that the scene was a mere visualization of his own remembrance of the affair, though it was from a new point of view that he saw his own figure bound onto the sheet, and watched the struggle that ended in the rescuer—whose blow had been greeted with cheers—slip from the step and so out of the picture.

Miss Connover was looking at him with a quizzical smile, but he sat silent, recalling each incident and pondering it in this new light.

The last scene on the bridge—there had been an intermediate one showing the young woman supplicating her captors—had been developed and retouched to give the effect of having been taken by moonlight. This was received with great enthusiasm.

"It's wonderful how they do it," remarked a woman on the other side of Billy.

"They must have taken it right there," rejoined her companion. "They've got everything just as it happened—I read the whole description in the *Standard*. I wonder what they did with the young fellow," she went on a moment later as the series came to its tragic close. "I s'pose they knew it wouldn't do to show him being thrown in after her—people wouldn't like it if it was so sensational."

Billy repeated the remark to Miss Connover as they passed back up the aisle.

"What *did* they do with the young man?"

"After they had lifted me back over the parapet—I was tied with two heavy ropes, you remember—my brother and Smithers put you in our motor and we took you home."

"Your brother operated the camera in the motor?"

"Yes."

"And the reason he arranged to throw me off the scent if I followed him to the repair-shop at Hampstead was because he thought I might sue them for assault?"

"Exactly—it was a wretched business in every way. I ought never to have taken part in it, but it required somewhat of an actress to carry it through, and my brother flattered me into helping him. Mother was dreadfully vexed when she heard about it—but the worst feature of the whole affair was its causing you so much suffering."

"It was worth it," said Billy, as he helped her into the cab.

"You would have thought so if you had seen Mr. Gibbs's face when he explained it to him," she laughed back.

"But do you know why I think so?"

She turned her head toward the shifting lights of the window without reply, but the hand that, groping in the shadow, closed boldly about her own, met certainly no resistance and perhaps response.



RONDEL

By Caroline Mischka Roberts

A SCENT of rose
Or violet
Naught to me blows
But vain regret;

For goodness knows
Where I might get
A cent for rose
Or violet!

I'd fain propose,
But in our set
Who flowerless goes
Ne'er won as yet
Assent from Rose
Or Violet.



FRIEND—Major, I see two cocktails carried to your room every morning, as if you had someone to drink with you.

MAJOR—Yes, sir; one cocktail makes me feel like another man, and of course I have to treat the other man.



MISTRESS (to colored house boy)—Don't your new shoes hurt you, Sam?

SAM—Yaas'm, dey do hurt me consid'able; sometimes I has ter get up in de middle of de night 'n' tek'm off.

A TRIO OF DUETS

By Yorke Stevenson

"YOU should ask Ethel to marry you," said Florence decidedly, as she poured me out a cup of tea one chilly afternoon in February.

She had begun by accusing me of laziness, inertia and various other negative qualities. I believe among other things she stated that I was a drag upon the march of progress, whatever that may mean. Then came the irrelevant remark above referred to.

I stirred my tea thoughtfully.

"It's hot," I said. "If I tried to take it now it would burn me and refuse to go down. You see I stir it; I put sugar in it and then I let it stand, while I talk, or rather listen to you."

"And when you take it up again," she put in quickly, "you will find it cold. You should take her while you can."

"Your grammar! Please take care of your grammar," I pleaded.

"Don't be silly," she answered viciously.

"But I can't help it," I replied mildly. "Besides, I like to be."

"When you are in one of these moods you're perfectly impossible," she cried. "I've done the best I can for both of you and nobody but a pair of mules could have remained unengaged as long as this. You've been driving and sleighing and skating together. You've taken long walks together, through the finest country I could find for you. I've been careful to have the moon just right and the dinners well cooked. I've kept myself and my husband out of the way as much as

possible, without giving up all ideas of decency, and yet here you are taking tea with me, while she is automobiling with somebody else and neither of you appears in the least put out about it. It's absurd!"

"But what must I do?" I asked. "I'll submit to anything you suggest. Have I not always done what you told me? When you turned on the moon and turned out the lights and yourself turned in, did I not sit beside her in the firelight and gaze into the glowing embers according to orders?"

"Well, what did you talk about?" inquired Florence, with the air of a prosecuting attorney.

"We discussed the comparative merits of the rough-coated fox-terrier and the Irish-terrier as rat-catchers," I answered sheepishly.

I thought Florence would have apoplexy.

"Was there ever such a pair!" she exclaimed.

"And what did you discuss that afternoon you went sleighing?"

"I told her of my past life," I replied.

"That was better," nodded Florence, approvingly.

"Yes," I went on, grimly, "I told her about the time we laid out Joe Radcliffe on the dining-room table at the club after he had been celebrating Irish Lad's winning of the Brooklyn Handicap, and how we put candles at his head and feet and held a wake over him."

"I knew it was hopeless," sighed Florence resignedly. "I might as well give up."

"It wasn't a bit hopeless," I replied vigorously. "He took the cure the following week and has never taken anything to speak of since."

"Oh, stop!" she cried contemptuously. "I don't wish to hear another word. I wash my hands of the whole thing."

"*Requiescat in pace*," I murmured maliciously.

"It's late," said Florence, looking at the clock.

"Only five," I pleaded.

"That's very late," she repeated firmly, rising and holding out her hand. I rose also.

"Must I ask her?" I said appealingly.

"Yes, at once."

I smiled. Florence smiled too.

"It won't be so difficult, you know," I said. "My real difficulty all along has been to keep from doing so."

Florence was radiant.

"Perhaps you'll come back to dinner," she said. "I expect company."

"Perhaps I will," I grinned, as I bowed myself out.

II

"I've a funny story to tell you," said Ethel as we left the last straggling houses of the city and whirled into the turnpike road. It had been raining the night before, and the cold morning air had frozen the drops on the trees until they resembled candy forests on frosted cake. The pony was doing his best and the wind whistled past in a continuous rush.

"Fire away," I said cheerfully.

"Did you notice my new acquisition at Mrs. Lawrence's dance the other night?" she asked.

"The one with every ear-mark of the college sophomore, conceit and all?"

"Yes," said Ethel, smiling. "He insisted upon following me about all evening."

"How strange!" I put in, sarcastically.

"He wanted both the cotillion and the supper," giggled Ethel, looking at me over her muff.

"Incomprehensible!" I smiled.

"Well," she continued, "he told me all about you."

"Heavens!" I cried, sitting up.

"But he confessed he knew you only by sight."

"What a relief!" I sank back.

"I never was so amused in my life," laughed Ethel. "I only wish you could have heard him. It was perfectly lovely! He began by saying that a remarkable personage was to lead the cotillion. He was a little late, but he would be sure to be there. He always did things like that. When I asked who it was, he looked at me in surprise and pity, as if I were abnormally ignorant. Do you think I am abnormally ignorant?" she added, turning to me plaintively.

"Heaven forbid!" I cried.

Ethel looked at me doubtfully for a moment, then nodded her sunny head and went on:

"He said, 'Don't you know Remsen, the football player—the fellow who has coached more winning teams than anyone else, since he left college?' I meekly answered 'Oh.' Then he became very arrogant and asked me if I knew you by sight. I replied that I thought I did. He didn't believe me, I know," she continued demurely.

"After that he went off on a long string of your accomplishments and incidentally of his own, telling me your whole history, and his own; your splendid shooting——"

"It's the gun," I protested.

"Your saving that man from drowning last Summer."

"He was too fat to sink," I explained.

"In fact, I really know all about you, now," she added, looking at me through the corners of her eyes.

"How awful," I groaned.

"But you should have seen his face when you bowed to me," she cried. "His manner became abjectly humble, as if I were above the common herd and should be treated with respect. Later he sighed and said he would like to meet you, but I said I was afraid to

ask you. He then left, saying that he understood my feelings perfectly."

"As if anyone could do that," I grunted. Then I turned and, looking at her severely, inquired if she had entirely finished. She glanced up in astonishment.

"Take it all back," I said threateningly, "every word of it, or I'll let the pony run away."

"I won't," she answered.

The pony started to canter.

"You were guying me and you must apologize," I stated firmly.

"I wasn't and I won't," was her categorical rejoinder. The pony broke into a gallop.

She gave a little gasp and seized the rail.

"I can't hold him," said I, letting the reins loosen.

"Oh, I never could have believed it of you!" she cried.

"We are coming to a steep grade in a moment," I remarked casually.

She looked ahead and then at me. Was there a gleam of merriment in her eye, or was it only the reflection of the flying, ice-coated trees?

"Very well," she sighed, "I didn't mean what I said about being afraid of you."

The pony came down to a trot at the very edge of the incline.

Nothing further, of public interest, occurred during the drive.

III

SPRING had come. The warm scent of the fallow earth was in the air. Nature stirred. In every direction signs of returning life could be seen.

We were leaning against the fence between the third and fourth holes of the Country Club course.

"You are one down," stated Ethel; "I never saw anyone play so badly."

"Golf?" I inquired innocently.

My remark was considered unworthy of notice.

"You topped your last drive and you seem to have lost all idea of direction," she continued severely. "A

man who plays most games as well as you, ought to be ashamed of such an exhibition."

"I thought they were rather neat," said I, examining critically the variegated hosiery which adorned the lower portion of my person.

"Don't try to beg the point," said Ethel, "and besides, golf-breeches and stockings are out of date."

"We're all growing old," I admitted. "Even you may some day be caught with a gown on six weeks behind the fashion."

The frightful possibility seemed to impress her.

"I saw a perfect dream in——"

"Help!" I cried. "It isn't fair. Here you have me all alone on the links, unprotected, at your mercy."

"Very well," she said demurely. "Only you must promise never to wear those things again."

"This is coercion," I said, "and promises extracted under compulsion need not be kept."

"Love, honor and obey," she murmured, as if to herself. "Promises extracted under compulsion—of remaining an old maid—naturally they need not— Don't!" she cried, when she could catch her breath. "You're so rough! and heavens, those people must have seen!"

"I don't care," I stated firmly, "it's not a crime!"

"No?" The gray eyes flashed provocatively.

"No," I stated positively, and did it again.

"What time is it?" she inquired rather breathlessly.

I looked at my watch. "You must hurry if you want to be in town in time for Mrs. Humphrey's dinner."

"I'm tired," stated Ethel. "I hate to think of going all the way in town, dressing and hurrying to that hideous dinner."

"It may taste better than it looks from here," I put in soothingly.

"Really I can't do it," she said. "I think I shall dine at the clubhouse and 'phone that I'm ill."

"I was invited, too," I reminded her.

"Well?" she interrogated.

"Well, we can't both be sick," I pointed out. "An ulterior motive might be attributed to the strange coinci—"

"Oh, but there's nothing to prevent your going," she interrupted.

"I'm only a weak, unprotected man," I pleaded, "and what's more I won't go without you," I added emphatically.

An inspiration appeared to strike her.

"Let's 'phone we've been called out of town," she cried.

"Together!" I exclaimed. "Fine! The call of the wild."

"It's an excuse, anyway," she argued, "and we can dine out here at the club."

"Alone!" I shuddered.

"Why not?" she inquired.

"You'll be bored," I said tentatively.

"I shall try not to show it," she said.

"But the last train leaves at 9.15, and I hate to hurry through dinner," I complained.

"Well, if we miss it, the club is nearly empty and we can easily stay there, and you can catch the 8.30 in the morning."

"What will people say?" I exclaimed, trying to look shocked.

"That we're out of town, silly."

"The woman tempted and I did fall," I misquoted.

"You're a dear!" she cried enthusiastically. "That's to reward your self-sacrifice," and she gave me something of indefinite value.

Just then someone shouted "Fore!" But to us it mattered little. We had been married only three weeks.



SOMEWHERE, ONCE AGAIN

By Edith M. Thomas

I MAY not see you till we die—
 In some still haven of the sky,
 All Karma-gales awhile gone by!
 I may not see you even then,
 Nor, till on earth, in stranger's guise,
 We meet, and start with vague surmise;
 But—by those starry lights, your eyes!—
 I'll know you, somewhere, once again.



THE HORRID THING

NAN—She's immensely clever; she has six languages at the tip of her tongue.
 TED—And where does the cleverness come in—in keeping them there?

KHORASAN

By Robert Gilbert Welsh

THE favorite spoke unto her lord,
"O mighty Khan of Khorasan,
I saw within this very hour
Your feathery date-palms break in flower!"
Then said the Khan, "Let wine be poured,
Some golden wine from Ispahan.
Drink, my Zareefeh, 'tis the Spring!
What of the harvest, who may know?
Plenty or famine though it bring,
'Tis well, since Allah wills it so!"

Said one, "From Sarhad's stony height,
Where law is not, and God forgot,
The Kurdish robbers came ere day
And stole thy camel herd away!"
And the Khan answered, "Who can fight
With flying foemen? Are they not
Safe in their fastness? From Oman
Fetch me new dromedaries. Go!
I drink, nor question—I, the Khan,
Content since Allah wills it so."

With songs of love and ancient tales
The mighty Khan of Khorasan
Lingered by Kashan's river-brim,
And slave-girls ministered to him
Hasheesh that brings, when all else fails,
Forgetfulness to sons of man.
What matter if Durani hordes
Swept down and laid his army low,
And won his Khanate for their lords?
Peace! did not Allah will it so?

Then a great Afghan bandit rose;
He seized the Khan of Khorasan,
And bound him solitary, far,
On the grim peak of Kaisergarh.
And the Khan cried across the snows,
Unheard of any mortal man,
"Where is my help? Or must I die
Upon this granite peak of woe?"
And echoing voices mocked his cry,
"Peace! did not Allah will it so?"

PUPPETS, BEST AND WORST

By Harriet Gaylord

THE first time they met she was sitting just outside her state-room door on the Dover-Calais boat, while his chair was close to the railing a little further aft. He had been watching her for some time, furtively, appraisingly, approvingly, when his ally, the storm god, suddenly lifted her veil from her hat and sent it swirling gracefully through the air to twine itself about his neck. As he blissfully bridged the material gulf between them, he was to all intents and purposes absorbed in the process of extricating himself from the chiffon toils.

"Thank you so much," she said. "Veils are hopeless in a wind like this."

"The pleasure is mine." He passed the lace vagrant to her soberly. Her manner put a period to further conversation, and he was rebellious.

"I'm feeling particularly lonely," he suggested. "I should so like to talk to a compatriot. Why not? Probably we know many of the same people, only we haven't happened to call on the same days. Won't you be charitable? We shall be in in half an hour."

"I haven't lived in America, nor seen many Americans for five years." She measured him with her eyes. "I almost think it would seem good to talk to one again—for half an hour."

"I am over only on a business trip," he said when he had brought his chair and seated himself at her side. "I wish it might happen to me to remain five years. One must absorb a great deal of atmosphere in that time."

"And a great deal of loneliness!

I'm afraid yours is only the affectation of the tripper who would rather gossip with the chance acquaintance than commune with his own thoughts. Mine goes rather deeper."

"You will soon be returning home?"

"This Autumn, but only for a stroll up Fifth avenue, a hand-shake or two, and perhaps, if I'm good, a drive in the Park. There's no one there who really 'belongs' now, you see, and circumstances make it wise for me to live on this side."

Suddenly she laughed merrily.

"Doesn't that sound dubious? I really must clear my reputation by confiding in you that it isn't what I have done, but what other people have done, that expatriates me."

"Oh," he answered sympathetically, "that sounds so much like something which happened in my own life that I have a sudden flash of intuition, very creditable for a man. Intuition," he added slowly, "and sympathy. Only in my case, I wasn't obliging enough to expatriate myself. Women are more unselfish."

"Or more cowardly, perhaps," she said lightly. "But we are very near to Calais, aren't we? It won't be even a half-hour."

"You are going on to Paris?"

"No. I'm just off for a little holiday on the Continent, and I shall strike east to Brussels."

"I am sorry. I should have begged you to let me talk to you all the way to Paris. Then we should have discovered our mutual friends."

"Don't let's try. It's so delightful sometimes not to be anchored—just to drift past and speak in passing."

"It is—sometimes." His pause was pregnant with disappointment.

"I have a strong feeling," she affirmed, "intuition, if you will, that we shall find it more delightful that way today."

"If you mean," he answered, and very slowly this time, "what I hope you mean, that there is—how shall I express it?—that you feel, as I feel, some bond between us—let me use your word!—as if we might 'belong,' then the moment we have together is infinite, and no anchoring in time can increase its potency; but, after all, we are finite creatures, and when today becomes yesterday shall we not feel sorry we—didn't tie a string to our new toy before we dropped it out of the window?" He smiled at her whimsically.

"Ah!" she answered, "I fear I am one of those improvident creatures who live wholly in the present. Once in a while I glance back at my play-days with longing, but the future does not exist for me. I am glad that we have met today. If we meet again by chance, I shall be glad. But please don't give me your card or tell me your name or be prosaic. If we really did meet 'last time' or time before last, perhaps we shall not wholly lose each other again. Let us trust our future to fate! I often wear veils."

"Then may the great god Thor—or Jupiter, according to which mythology you prefer—always stir up a storm when we are on the same continent! Alas! it wasn't nearly a half-hour—only a little moment. Can I help you through the customs?"

"If you will be so good. One realizes what men were made for, I think, when one is so unfortunate as to travel alone."

Not long afterward she waved him a farewell from the window of her compartment, and he helplessly watched her glide away into the unknown.

Three weeks later she stepped from the little cog-wheel train above Kleine Scheidegg, almost into his arms.

"*Gott sei dank!*" he cried devoutly.

"You don't know how I've wanted to talk to you every day since. Are you alone?"

"Yes, and I've got just about a half-hour again. I ran away from head-achy friends in Interlaken to get a real breath of air before we leave for Lucerne this evening. And you can stay—how long?"

"Three-quarters of an hour, alas! I have to meet a friend in Grindelwald. You can't go down that way?"

"No, it would make me too late. I have to meet my friends at the station as it is. I felt such an uncontrollable desire to breathe some Jungfrau air today."

"I sent Mercury down to tap you with his wand," he answered. "I was tired of Thor's postponements."

"I hadn't realized your intimacy with the higher powers. I shall begin to be afraid of you."

"And after today—I shall be confident."

"Of what?"

"The future."

"Don't!" She turned to him abruptly. "Don't! don't! don't! Let us forget past and future and run up toward that glacier. I want to smell the ice. I am going with my friends—Oh, I mustn't tell you where we are going. It will spoil this beautiful incognito feeling. But we are going where I can't smell any more glaciers for a few days."

"Won't you please tell me where? After all, I'm very frail, very human, very materialistic! I can't keep up my confidence when you are out of my sight. For three weeks I've suffered horribly from doleful dumps!"

"And yet some way if your 'legs were smitten off' I think you'd be the sort to 'fight on your stumps,' wouldn't you?"

"There! I knew you read books!"

"And I've wondered a little if you don't write them?"

"Intuition again! Yes, I have been guilty."

"And I may have read them, and that is why I know you."

"You do feel that you know me?"

"A little."

"The books don't matter. The feeling's the thing. And it's overwhelmingly mutual. I tell you honestly that I haven't the slightest idea where you should be pigeonholed, but I have an inexplicable conviction that when we do stand revealed in the social world we shall find some bond between us other than that of the spirit. Don't you share that assurance?"

"You are more intuitive than most men. I suppose it is because you write books."

"Don't you share that assurance?" he persisted.

She faced him, and to his surprise her eyes were clouded with unshed tears. She spoke as impulsively as a child.

"Yes, I do, and I'm afraid! If I weren't, I should tell you my name today. Oh, why will you probe into the future?"

"Ah!" He paused for a long time, and then added: "You make me unutterably happy. If you are afraid—then you—care! And I—care greatly!"

She made no answer. They were nearing the glacier. After a time he went on:

"I can't tell you how sure I am that we love the same things so much that we must inevitably find all comfort, all sympathy, all understanding, all satisfaction in each other. One meets thousands of women, but once in a million years one meets One. And after that there are no more forever. And—don't you think one must tie the string today? If—oh, surely one mustn't risk a lifetime of loss! Loss of you? You don't know what that would mean to me. At this moment I can only feel how large the world is, and that fate is not always kind!"

They were close to the Eiger Gletscher, and she stood with her face turned away from him, gazing across the mass of ice and stones and detritus to the Jungfrau beyond. He waited impatiently. At last she answered:

"I like to think you are my friend. I should find great joy in that link between us. I—in other ways I do

not regard myself as free. You—you yourself have no ties?"

"None, thank God!"

"You have never been married?"

There was another pause. Then he said reluctantly:

"I am sorry you asked me that. Yes, I have been married. I will answer your next question before you ask it. My wife is not dead. She divorced me."

"Oh!"

"I consider myself as free as I was before I made so hideous a mistake. I want you to think of me that way also."

Her face was very pale as she turned it toward him.

"It is time for me to go back to catch my train, isn't it?"

He looked at his watch.

"Yes."

She smiled, but her smile held no joy.

"My friend," she said, "I have had my breath of a glacier. Please always remember that. I might not have come had I realized just how cold a glacier is. You see—I do not regard myself as free. You—there is a barrier."

"You are prejudiced against marriage?"

"Let it go at that and let us not spoil, with argument, the few moments we have left."

They walked on, almost in silence. As they reached the station, he said:

"I may not ask your name, tell you mine? Are you wise? Ought we to trust an uncertain future when so much is at stake?"

"Forgive me," she answered, "but I would rather leave it that way. I—I feel strongly that we shall meet again."

"God grant it!" he said fervently, and a second time he watched her pass from him into the unknown.

Ten days later when he was threading his way, glass in hand, among British peers and other celebrated matutinal water-drinkers toward the Elizabethan spring in Homburg, he caught sight of her graceful figure just

in advance. The band was playing "*Ein feste burg ist unser Gott*," but his feet shamelessly bounded forward in quickstep tempo.

"The god who has brought us together today," he said, "is small but mighty. He wears his wings on his shoulders, not on his feet. Now what are you going to say to disprove that?"

She looked at him joyously.

"This is my favorite hour of the day," she answered. "I feel at peace with all the world and quarrel with no God-gifts. They are my just wage."

"Even I?"

"You are more than all. How long have you been in Homburg, pray?"

"One week. And you?"

"We arrived yesterday."

"And I, alas! must leave this morning to catch my steamer. My heart went down, down, down, and out when I received the cablegram calling me home. I was trying to inveigle it back into my anatomy, but now I'm glad it's outside as an anticipatory measure. Won't you take it, please, and keep it till my return? And won't you tell me where to come to find you?"

She walked by his side, thoughtfully silent. He waited. At last she spoke.

"Don't you hate to face what seem to be finalities? One is so much happier just to live in the moment. I'd love to drift along and wait for you to sail into my life again."

"But we must not tempt the gods. They sometimes turn their faces away from mortals and will no longer be cajoled. And our patron today is only a child. One really can't hurt children, don't you see?"

She made no answer until, their glasses filled, they had turned into a secluded path. Then she said:

"We do seem to talk in silence, don't we? One often speaks most unerringly that way."

"And meanwhile the little god anxiously waits!"

"Let us sit down here," she said, pointing to a bench. Then she laughed. "How beyond worlds unbelievable it is

that we are taking life so seriously when we know nothing of each other. I wonder if we aren't just lonely or morbid?"

He rested his arm on the back of the seat and looked at her.

"Change glasses," he commanded suddenly.

She obeyed. As he turned hers so his lips rested where her lips had been a moment before, she caught her breath with the thrill of his preemption. Against her desire she raised his glass to her lips and drank. The sacrament pulsed through their veins.

"Something has happened!" Her eyes were wide with inevitableness. "How can we ever go back?"

"We can't," he affirmed gravely. "But you and I could never have gone back even of that first meeting. It was written!"

"And yet, true though that is, it spells pain."

"Why, dearest, why?"

"Because, however much we 'belong' in heart, we cannot belong in our lives."

"Women often create false barriers which men override."

"Yes, yes! I know that. And this is of that sort in the eyes of a vast majority, but for me only the death of a man and a woman would eliminate that barrier. And you and I—do not kill."

"You have suffered?"

"Horribly."

"And you loved him?"

"Hideously."

"You love him yet?"

"No, God be thanked!"

"And the woman?—you mean the woman who was my wife?"

"Yes."

"It was the same with you?"

"Yes. I would not divorce him. I believed it wrong. I came over here. He went to some Western State and charged me with desertion—it was easy for him, you see. But I—hold myself bound—I hold myself bound."

As her voice sank into a despairing whisper, his heart leaped with hope.

"Tell me your name, now," he said. "I was not living in New York when

you went away, but we shall meet when you return. Till then, let us realize what the future might hold for us if we faced it boldly together."

"No, no!" she cried with stubborn insistence. "My only safety lies in never seeing you again. At least I know that."

"At least I hope you are not a coward."

"I'm not so sure. I never felt this way before."

"Nor I. And that's conclusive."

After a moment he looked at his watch.

"My train leaves in half an hour," he said. "We shall have to turn back, now. Unfortunately, I cannot change my sailing."

"Perhaps that will be our salvation," she said, rising. "Always only half an hour!"

"That will suffice," he answered, "until it is 'Till death do us part.'"

She shuddered.

"Oh, why did you remind me of the fiasco of the vow we both have taken—to our hurt?"

"Because I still have faith in the perfect union once in a thousand centuries—the union which even death has no power to dissolve."

Her eyes answered to the call of his words as she said:

"And I also, in my heart of hearts, believe! But what a mockery when the man and the woman meet too late."

"I," he replied, "feel only the bliss that they have met in time!"

He took from his pocket a sealed card envelope.

"You see, I expected to find you again. Will you take this? You need not know my name now, but if we do not meet shortly after you come to New York, won't you open it and drop me a line?"

She hesitated, and he continued:

"You are a very reckless individual, you see. I know there are other gods in the Empyrean, but I'm not afraid to trust them after three of the most dependable have done their best for me. Please give me your promise. Is it too great a test of your generosity?"

"Too great a test of my strength, I fear. But I promise."

"And I thank you. For such a woman as you it will be hard to wait—till Autumn."

When Linda Clements had been in New York one week in early November she saw the man who had so forcefully entered her life, sitting at their hostess's right at a large dinner, diagonally across from her as he had been that first day on the deck. They bowed and smiled their gladness, and their eyes held a promise.

"Tell me your name now," he insisted, joining her later as he entered the drawing-room, and guiding her to an alcove. "I cannot be so banal as to ask to be presented."

"I succumb to the inevitable," she answered. "It is written! I didn't even ask who the guest of honor was tonight—I think it seemed banal to me also. Suppose you begin? Whose name is on that card? I honestly have never looked to see."

"Then I may at last fix myself in time and space. I thank you. I only wish that the man had made his name more worthy of the woman at whose feet he places his life. I am Barbour Knowles."

Her face paled, and for an instant her lips were drawn. Then she tried to smile.

"It needed only this final jest of fate to teach me that the gods love to mock at the puppets they have created," she said quietly. "I have always loved your books, but the barrier between us is quite unsurmountable. I think I had a premonition and so postponed the evil day of tasting the apple. I am Linda Clements."

"Ah!" He breathed deeply, and another silence fell between them. At last he turned and held her eyes locked to his.

"Remember," he said, "that for me the barrier between us was demolished when my wife divorced me to marry your husband. For you I can still—if needs be—wait!"

THE BASHFUL ELDER

By Grace MacGowan Cooke

"HE marched right up the steps and rang the bell like a human being!" announced Alicia. "Something awful must be the matter."

"Oh—it's the bashful elder," said Champe, peering over her sister's shoulder.

"Did you ever hear that his wife proposed to him?" queried Ross Pryor, lounging in the big wicker chair. "She did. He ran—without answering at all (just as I should if Champe up and asked me that important question); and his mother carried the word to her the next day."

"Of course she must have," agreed Alicia ambiguously, turning from the window where the two girls had been hidden behind the lace curtain. "He never would have asked her. Now that he's a widower he's too bashful to have a woman servant in the house. Uncle Dan'l cooks for him yet. I think it's too bad."

Alicia did not specify whether the elder's bashfulness or Uncle Dan'l's cooking was the thing which was too bad.

"You know he wanted to dress his little girls like boys, so that they wouldn't startle him when he looked at them," Ross proceeded, with a breath of laughter in his big voice. "The minister interfered with that. The elder told me himself that he always plants a patch of corn up close to the house, so that he can run and hide in it if he sees a woman coming. Mary Isabel's Sunday-school teacher hadn't any better sense than to go there when that corn was less than two feet high,

and it was plumb pitiful to see him dive out of the back door, gallop to the patch and worm in among the corn flat on the ground, thinking it was tall enough to hide him that way."

"And was it?" inquired Alicia. She had no sense of humor, but great kindness of heart.

"Come here—you-all," whispered Champe from the window where she had lingered. "He's like a stag at bay—just as bold as brass. Aunt Missouri answered the door, and he's talking to her. She's pretty, if she is our aunt, old enough to be our mother—and if she does pinch a penny till the eagle pecks her fingers."

"Do you call that talking to anybody—holding his head down and toeing in like a boy saying a speech, and twisting the buttons off his coat?" demanded Alicia.

"Uncle Dan'l says he can tell whenever a woman's been speaking to ol' marse—or even passed very close to him—by the buttons he's twisted off," supplied Ross, coming up behind the two and bending his laughing blond face above theirs.

"Don't be silly," admonished Champe briefly. "Listen."

The guest, a tall man with bent shoulders and a head that suggested a chicken tucking a timid bill under a modest wing, was dressed in his best. A black frock-coat, trousers of striped material, a silk hat, a collar—at which he plucked in his excitement—suggested courting trim. His scanty red beard, parted in the middle, had evidently been curled each way over a horny forefinger; but his holiday attire

sorted ill with his truly dismal countenance; and he now fixed the most beseeching and piteous look upon someone whom they could not see. There were haggard lines around his mouth, and his eyes were wild.

"Get back. Sit down. Look natural. She's asking him in," volleyed Champe in energetic whispers.

The young folks had hardly time to dispose themselves in becoming attitudes when the door opened and the bashful elder, Samuel Wimberly, stood upon its threshold, with Miss Missouri Claiborne behind him.

"I—ah—I desired to confer with your father," said the timid man, backing abruptly from the sight of so many petticoats, and thereby colliding with Aunt Missouri.

"Father's in there—isn't he, Sam?" And the young people remembered with a shock a family tradition that the bashful elder had been Missouri Claiborne's only beau. Wimberly seemed to be yet struggling to escape; Missouri's solid bulk gave not an inch.

"She'll have to blindfold him and back him in," whispered Ross, behind Champe's shoulder.

"Here's grandfather," announced dutiful Alicia, having slipped into the dining-room to call the old gentleman.

Wimberly plunged at him as toward a life-raft. He shook hands long and exhaustively, eying Mr. Claiborne tremulously, and murmuring over and over: "How are you all? I came to see you because I'm in trouble, and you're a neighbor and friend. I'm in great distress and you're a friend and neighbor. Something must be done, and who will—will help us if not our neighbors and friends?"

"I'll bet he wants your grandfather to go with him somewhere," continued Ross's whisper at Champe's ear. "He hasn't been to church since his partner died, because he's too bashful to go alone. They say he trembles when he passes the tombstones of females in the churchyard."

"Ridiculous—aren't you ashamed!" Champe murmured back.

"He had a well dug out at his house,

because he wasn't willing to have any 'cistern' on the place."

"I thought you'd been vaccinated for the pun habit," in fine disdain. "Do hush. Haven't you any manners? Listen to what the man is saying."

"Ithuriel Claiborne," began Wimberly, "you know my weakness. I've always been a modest man. My wife asked me in marriage; my mother conveyed my answer. Both of these good women are gone. No other lady has since proffered—"

Aunt Missouri silently pushed a chair toward him, and he sank into it. Mr. Claiborne cleared his throat, it was notorious that there were many ladies in the village perfectly willing to "proffer" had they any assurance that the elder would nerve himself to accept. A hush of expectancy fell upon the sitting-room. Ross touched the little curls on Champe's white nape and whispered, "Brace up. Your time has come."

"I am a widower," burst out the miserable man. "My home is desolate; my children need a caretaker. I—"

The perspiration stood upon his brow in beads. Taken in connection with his costume, these words could point but one way—yet why address them to Mr. Claiborne in the presence of a room full of people?

"Yes—yes, Sam. We know all this. What can we do to assist you?" inquired the old gentleman, drawing off his glasses, polishing them and returning them to his nose. "Perhaps you would like to have me suggest some suitable female—"

The bashful elder groaned so suddenly and so loudly that everybody was startled. "No, no—not that!" he chattered. "I want you to help. But I"—he glanced behind him—"I must speak fast. She'll be after me!"

"She?" echoed Aunt Missouri sharply.

"Is some female in—ah, in actual pursuit of you?" propounded the old man seriously.

"Who is she?" chorused the two girls.

The elder's gaze swept the room and interrogated the window, as though his instinct was for flight. There was always the suggestion of a wild thing trapped about the way he sat or stood in the presence of the other sex. "I—I answered an advertisement," he began in a faltering half-whisper. The room was so still that every word and even his laboring breaths between were audible. "A mild-tempered widow put it in the paper that she wanted a home. I answered the advertisement," he returned to the refrain in dirge fashion. "She sent me her picture."

He roused as from a nightmare, looked about him on the wondering, listening faces and gasped. Thrusting a hand into his pocket he drew out the picture of a fair, broad-browed woman of middle age, a noted philanthropic worker, whose face is familiar to readers of periodicals everywhere. Only the elder's ignorance on all matters concerning the sex could account for his not recognizing it.

"She sent me this," he almost sobbed. "She wrote loving letters. She said she was fond of children—that her only fault was a lack of temper; she was too meek, too fond. I—it made me feel that she would be—the one."

"Well?" queried Aunt Missouri.

It seemed anything but well.

"I—I got my license this morning," the elder, thus prompted, staggered on, just audibly; "and—and now she's come!"

Once more Missouri enunciated impatiently, "Well?"

Wimberly clutched the arms of his chair and sank against its back with closed eyes. "You are my neighbors and friends. Ithuriel Claiborne, you and I went to school together. Who should help me, if not you folks?"

The bashful elder had infected the entire company with his terror. What he had stated was after all not awful to any of them; yet they shuddered as he made his wild, ominous-sounding appeal. All except Aunt Missouri. Perfectly calm, and even a bit contemp-

tuous, she had taken up her sewing; and she now snapped off a thread with unnecessary vigor, as she questioned curtly:

"And won't the mild, loving widow have you?"

There was something about Miss Claiborne that encouraged timid things, in spite of her brusqueness. Once more the elder turned and looked over his shoulder.

"Mild! Loving!" he echoed under his breath. "Missouri, I'm a modest man; I am not one to rush in. Mrs. Staggy telegraphed me that she was coming on the eight-o'clock train; and at a quarter to eight I was at the back windows of the station—in a safe place—in a safe place—looking in. Who was I, to intrude upon the last shy hours of a promised bride? Why, I might scare her."

"Well?" came Missouri's invariable prod. "Did you scare her—or did she scare you?"

The latter seemed so much more probable that Champe giggled, and then tried to turn the sound into a cough.

"Friends and neighbors, a female as tall—almost—as the spire of the new Methodist church, got off that train. She had arms and fists like a man, and big fierce teeth. She—she"—his voice sank lower—"she wore bub—bub—"

"Good land! Say it," ejaculated Missouri in extreme exasperation.

"Bloomers! She certainly wore bloomers, or something equivalent. They—it—they were certainly not a dress." Terror seemed to have eaten up the elder's grammar. "She quarreled with the stationmaster about her trunk. She put her foot on it and swore at him—she did indeed. She threatened the man that I would settle his hash—'Settle your hash' were the words she used—because she was coming on here to marry me. To—marry me!"

The elder quite collapsed. Champe picked up the hat which dropped from his nerveless hand, and patted its crown sympathetically as she laid it on

the table. Alicia ran to bring a glass of water for him.

"Tut, tut—too bad!" murmured Grandfather Claiborne, while Ross shook his head and agreed with the utmost seriousness that the elder was up against a tough proposition.

But Missouri Claiborne continued to set stitches in her work with an unmoved countenance. "Humph!" she commented at last. "Well, I don't see anything for you to do but to go and borrow a hole and crawl in it. We'll not uncover you—I'll say that much."

"Daughter—daughter!" remonstrated her father, "you should not afflict the unhappy with your levity." Then to Wimberly, "Samuel, have you laid any plans for escape?"

The bashful elder had gratefully accepted Alicia's glass of water, without apparently observing her sex and youthful beauty. Such an oversight was scarce to be rated below a miracle, and was certainly a most hopeful sign. Driven to extremity, his bashfulness seemed to evaporate.

"I have," he returned with desperate resolution. "You—you've got plenty of womenfolks in your family, Mr. Claiborne. They can't all of 'em be too busy this morning to drive over to the station with me. It would be a neighborly act—the act of a Christian and a friend." He raised hunted eyes toward the three women present. "If one of you will go with me and merely sit in the buggy and say nothing," he explained, "I will induce the station-agent to tell this female that you are my—my wife." With a gulp and a gasp he was over it. "My hope is that this may discourage her, and she will go home. When I left she was perched on her trunk waiting for me to come."

Grandfather Claiborne saw no humor in the situation; he never did in anything which appealed to his kind heart. Intent upon relieving a fellow-creature's distress, he at once suggested that member of his household to whom he himself would have turned in extremity.

"Certainly, certainly, Samuel; Champe here will be glad to drive over

with you and help you out in that way."

Champe caught Ross Pryor's wicked eye, and tossed her head. "I'm sorry to refuse," she said airily; "but I'm afraid to be lent—the temptation to keep me would be too strong."

She followed Ross, who was trembling with some suppressed emotion, into the hall. Alicia, blushing furiously, jumped to her feet and hurried after them. Across the elder's bowed shoulder Mr. Claiborne's somewhat dismayed gaze encountered that of his daughter Missouri. Could it be—was she winking? While he stared in silence she spoke up briskly:

"I'll drive over with you, Sam. Budd & Jopson are selling four rolls of tape for a nickel today; I aimed to have Babe hitch up and take me in to get a dime's worth, anyhow. I'll go with you."

"Thank the Lord!" The elder was a man again. He sprang up. "Will someone go for her bonnet, Claiborne? Don't let her leave the room; she might change her mind."

Intoxicated by the mixed drinks of terror and relief, he reached out and grasped her apron-string. His large hand closed upon the slender white strip as might a drowning man's on a straw. The gratitude of a saved dog spoke in his eyes.

Champe raided the hall rack, and ran back into the room to pin her own hat with its rollicking poppies and scarlet bows upon Aunt Missouri's abundant brown hair, which was but sparsely salted with gray upon the temples.

"Come," said the elder hastily. "Come. My buggy's at the gate. There's a train in two hours. If we can only discourage her into taking that!"

In his trepidation he clapped on Ross's cap instead of the hat Alicia solicitously presented, and the strangely assorted pair drove away; as far as the three young folks with Grandfather Claiborne, watching from the gate, could see, the elder leaned forward to whip his old gray horse into an increase of speed.

"This seems kind of like old times," began Missouri, as she settled herself comfortably in the buggy. "I remember as if it was yesterday, the night you drove me home from camp-meeting. Don't you recollect it, Sam? One of our horses fell and broke the carriage pole, and you took me in your rig."

"I have never forgotten it—never!" returned the elder with deep feeling. "That was the only time in all my life that an unmarried woman sat beside me in my buggy."

"You ran over one of Uncle Dan's hounds that night."

"He came next day and made me pay a dollar for the dog—but I didn't care."

"The wheel took three pickets off the corner of the Jiltons' fence. That scared me a little, I remember," Aunt Missouri continued her reminiscences.

The elder shook his head, upon which Ross's cap sat with the appropriateness of a pun on a tombstone. "I was excited—I was excited. That was the happiest ride of my life. When we knocked the pickets off you sat closer to me."

"I told you I was scared," explained Aunt Missouri, flushing prettily.

"Of course—of course, you were only frightened; but oh, what joy it was for me!"

"Why didn't you tell me so?"

"Tell you! Tell *you*?" his jaw dropped. He was beginning to remember that he was the bashful elder. "Why, I never had the courage. Tell you, Missouri? How could I?"

"You had the courage today."

"Oh—today." He took off Ross's cap and looked at it consideringly. "I'm a little out of myself today. Even my hat looks unfamiliar to me."

She snatched it from him, half laughing, and replaced it on his head. "That isn't yours," she said. "That's Ross Pryor's cap. Sam Wimberly, I do wish you'd get over being scared to death and act like a human. Nobody's going to eat you—you're too old and tough."

The bashful elder—probably from

sheer habit—had winced away from her hand as she twitched the boyish tweed headgear into place on his grizzled hair. Yet there was an expression in his face that suggested not altogether terror. "That—that woman," he reminded her.

She regarded him as an exasperated mother might a trying child, her irritation yielding by degrees to a patronizing tenderness. "Do you hate so bad to go in and face her?"

With a sort of sob the elder whipped up his horse, every movement indicated the tremendous strain under which he was laboring. The red roof of the station came in sight. He mopped the sweat from his brow with a tremulous hand and a red bandanna. The last shred of Missouri Claiborne's annoyance was swept away in pity. "You needn't go in at all," she said in a motherly voice. "I'll 'tend to that woman. You just sit out here in the buggy where I can call on you if I need to."

But when she, in her turn, had peeped through the rear windows of the waiting-room she scuttled back to the buggy with a less confident face. "You've got to stay here now. Don't you run off and leave me," she warned.

"I won't, Missouri," returned the elder fervently. "I—I'll never run away from you, Missouri. May the Lord bless and reward you for a kind friend and a brave woman!"

"Well, see that you don't. Now, I'm off. I—I'm going in there." She straightened her plump figure and assumed an aggressiveness quite foreign to her usual manner. At the worst, Aunt Missouri was never more than notoriously economical; and brow-beating a tradesman is so feminine an accomplishment that it might almost be called womanly.

The big, hard-favored woman, whose curiously ill-fitting short skirt the elder had taken for bloomers, was still sitting upon her trunk. Evidently she had quarreled with the stationmaster till he threatened to remove it, and this was her only method of retaining her

property where she desired it to be. At the sound of a brisk, assertive step, and the quick swish of starched petticoats, she turned with a snort, prepared instinctively for battle. In her face—ugly as no good woman could be—a prepared resentment lay in wait for that humiliation which she plainly began to apprehend.

"Madam," opened Aunt Missouri, and no friend in Pisgah would have recognized her voice, "is your name Staggs? Are you the person who has been circulating false reports about my husband, Samuel Wimberly?"

The big woman heaved herself upright and towered above short, plump Missouri Claiborne. It was some time since the agent had barricaded himself in an inner room, and she welcomed this timely opponent.

"I told the doddering idiot they have for a stationmaster here that I came on to marry Samuel J. Wimberly, of Pisgah, a widower with three children—if that's what you mean by 'circulating reports.' I ain't got anything to do with your husband; but if you're a friend of the man I name, you'd better tell him to take his foot in his hand and come along. I'm tired of waiting." Her coarse face reddened darkly.

"Samuel J. Wimberly, an elder in the Presbyterian church, the father of three small children, is my—my husband." Aunt Missouri negotiated the benevolent lie bravely.

The skirt which looked so like bloomers bagged at the knees; its wearer had evidently received what Ross would describe as a solar plexus blow.

"Do you reckon it's the same man? Are there two of the name in this town? He promised to meet me here today—and have the marriage license ready. I've got his letter with me."

Missouri Claiborne's stout heart had been pounding desperately against her ribs for some time. She was afraid the station-agent would come in and hear her. She was afraid some village loafer would stroll past. It was no trouble to sink into a seat and begin to

weep with the utmost naturalness and vehemence.

"That letter—I want to see that letter!" she sobbed. "How do I know that you're not telling a falsehood?"

Nobody would ever have credited Aunt Missouri with histrionic ability; yet when the mild widow produced a letter—one small sheet of the thin, checkered notepaper favored by village schoolgirls—and she stretched out a shaking hand for it, she looked the abused wife, from streaming eyes to restless tapping boot-toes.

"I'll bet he's went back on you and is gettin' a divorce on the sly," declared the newcomer, with more bluster than real confidence.

"I won't believe it till I see it in his own handwriting," sniffed Aunt Missouri.

She drew out her spectacles, put them on, unfolded the letter and went to the window. As she feared, it was all there in full with imbecile recklessness—the signature, the date, the explicit pledge. In the hands of a woman like this it meant marriage or a breach of promise suit. She knew that to poor old Samuel Wimberly suicide would present attractions in contrast to the latter. A vision of his drooping form and appealing face came before her; recollections of his timid advances made years ago; again in imagination she felt his big hand clutching her apronstring.

"What are you doing?" demanded the big woman.

Missouri faced around placidly. She was chewing like a cow with a rather tough cud. She felt the battle was won, and she smiled. Next instant, with a spasmodic effort, the incendiary bit of paper was safely swallowed.

"You—you—you!" choked the Staggs woman. "My letter! Give me my letter! You old feather-bed with a string tied around it—give me my letter!"

Missouri Claiborne was her phlegmatic, practical self once more. "There'd be no use trying to bring that up again," she said with unconscious facetiousness. "Samuel

may have been in fault—I don't say that he wasn't. But you tried to deceive him every way; you palmed off a picture out of a magazine as your own. Oh, he showed it to me," as the other drew back, furious, uncouth in her discomfiture.

"He—of course he's treated me very mean," Missouri hastened to remark, but in so perfunctory a tone that the newcomer looked suspicious; "yet I won't have him talked about and abused. Besides, it would be disagreeable for me and the children. I'm sorry for you that you can't get married—it's a pitiful thing when a woman just can't get *anyone* to have her—but—"

With unerring feminine instinct, she had struck the right note. "There's plenty more that wants me!" hissed the lady of the trunk. "I could get married three times a day at home, if I was a mind to."

"You'd better go back there, then, and get married once, anyhow," Missouri counseled. But she spoke with too much eagerness, and the woman retorted bitterly:

"Say, you're mighty busy about this thing! I've only got your word for it that you're Samuel Wimberly's wife. Let him come and tell me so himself."

Missouri thrust forward her well-molded chin, and looked as fierce as a speckled biddy, ruffling up to protect its brood. "You go and look out of that back window there, and you'll see Mr. Wimberly sitting in a buggy waiting for me. No, don't you go by the door; the agent'll carry your trunk into the baggage-room if you do. Just open the window and call to Sammy. He can hear you."

A muscular arm thrust up the window with a slam. The drooping, apprehensive man in the buggy almost fainted as the red, angry face looked out with, "Say, are you Elder Samuel J. Wimberly, of Pisgah, that wrote to Mrs. Daisy Stagg, of Mossy Creek, and said he'd—?"

Wimberly found his voice. "Yes—yes—yes, I am," he hastened to in-

terrupt. "I wrote to Mrs. Stagg at Mossy Creek. But—"

"Well, is this feather-bed with a string around it in here your wife?"

The elder was a truthful man. He had lived an innocent life, singularly free from falsehood or deceit; but, as he afterward ingenuously explained, he borrowed a lie from the devil for the occasion.

Where he sat he had a good view of the coarse virago whom he had found it easy to propose to—by letter. Behind her shoulder appeared Missouri Claiborne's plump, calm, comfortable face. He drew a long breath. He clung to the lines as though they were life-lines, heroically fighting the temptation to whip up his horse and escape.

"Yes!" he roared, with a perfect explosion of emphasis. "Yes! Yes! Yes! That's my wife. I'm sorry for what I did, but—"

"Hush your noise!" snapped the widow from Mossy Creek. "Here, you, Mrs. Wimberly—if that's your name—go and buy me a ticket back home, and I'll take the next train. You owe me that much for eatin' up my love-letter. I hope it'll make you as sick as it did me to read it."

This speech was not ended before Missouri began to dicker with the ticket-agent, upon whose window she had hammered with her umbrella till he showed an astonished face. Aunt Missouri had never been persuaded that an agent, unlike a clerk in a store, could not be beaten down to reasonable prices. She had been known to give up a journey where such bargaining failed. But now she wasted not an instant in demur, simply exclaiming, when the price of the desired ticket was stated to her, that it was extortionate, shameful, dishonest—all the while counting out the money as swiftly as possible; and the transaction was accomplished in season for the defeated Mrs. Stagg to climb aboard her train and be hurried away by a disgustingly snorting engine. Missouri did not leave the track till the train disappeared around a curve.

"Bless you, honey!" breathed the

grateful elder, when she climbed smiling into the buggy beside him. "The Lord bless you for your kindness, Missouri, honey."

The blessed lady sank back on the cushions somewhat overcome by such an outburst from the bashful elder. Finally she plucked up spirit to say, "Now I've got you out of this scrape, I'd like to know what you're going to do next?"

"A-anything you say, Missouri." His voice halted as though he had debated adding the endearment, and failed courage to do so.

"Sam Wimberly!" Miss Claiborne demanded suddenly, "did you actually and truly take out a marriage license to marry that critter?"

He began to shake. "You don't think they's any danger of her coming back, do you?"

"No, no," impatiently. "You won't have any more trouble with her—though I could have dropped in my tracks when I saw your proposal all written out good and plain, and signed." (There was a rare tinge of bitterness in her pleasant, heartsome voice, whose source the man would have been far from guessing.) "If she'd kept that she'd have come back—she never would have left at all."

The elder shivered, and moaned a little. "What became of it?" he whispered, watching his companion with fascinated eyes.

"It was a little piece of paper, and thin. I pretended to study over it, and took it to the window; and when she wasn't looking I just put it in my mouth and ate it up."

"Oh, Missouri, honey!" the elder returned with increased ardor to his safe formula. "I believe—I believe—"

There was a long silence.

"It doesn't make a bit of difference what you believe," said Missouri, when she found there was no hope of his going on. "What's troubling me is that license. How much did you pay for it?"

"Three dollars and a half—and I've already sent the preacher his five dollars—that's eight-fifty altogether."

Missouri Claiborne frowned and made with her tongue that little clucking sound of reprobation which serves instead of speech. "A man like you ain't to be trusted with anything in his pocket that could get him into trouble as easy as that license could," she ruminated. "And yet it cost too much for you to tear up. Sam, what's the age of your biggest boy?"

"Goin' on twelve."

She shook her head. "He might have used it if he'd been older; but 'tain't worth while to save it for him, I reckon. Billy Prince is going to be married next month. You might—"

The elder handed the lines to Missouri, solemnly drew the paper from his pocket, and opened it upon his knee; the two graying heads in their incongruous headgear were bent above it.

"It's dated," murmured Miss Claiborne. "I don't believe it will be good after today."

The man glanced sidewise at her fresh, comely cheek. "I ain't set so close to you since that night at the camp-meeting."

Ah, that night at the camp-meeting! How little he knew of the wakeful hours which followed the long drive home, when she had wept for the words he failed to say while they were alone together. The cheek he regarded became redder. "That was a long time ago—oh, my!" the woman breathed.

"Not so long, but what I remember that I asked if you thought the price of eggs was going up," said her companion. "I had some fool boy's notion of working around from that to the mention of weddin' cake. But—don't you recollect, Missouri?—you let in and talked all the rest of the way about how Hank Peavy had paid you less than the market price for the last batch of eggs you sent him—and I was plumb outfaced."

Poor Missouri! Her rage for economy had cost her dear that one time. Looking back over the years when a warped and thwarted life of spinsterhood had developed the foolish weakness into an incorrigible and notorious eccentricity, she felt that it had cost

her too dear. The very habit itself counseled that she try to purchase her sorrow cheaper—or at least it seemed to call for a rebate.

"Missouri!" the elder was laboriously arranging and rearranging in his mind the one jest of his lifetime. "Missouri, you accepted—and swallowed—my offer of marriage."

"Why, Sammy!"

"And this is Preacher Barkley's," he concluded with sudden courage, as the old gray was drawn to a standstill in front of a cheerful cottage. "He's expectin' me. It does seem a pity for that there license to be wasted."

He got out of the buggy and stood beside it with arms uplifted toward her. "Won't you, Missouri? Just for—just as—a matter of economy?"

It was dusk when Champe saw her aunt and Mr. Wimberly coming up the drive. "Something's the matter," she announced. "Aunt Missouri's hat's on one side. And the elder's lost your cap, Ross. No, it's in her lap. Gracious! he must be in a dreadful way. See, she's fanning—oh, no, she's—why, Ross, she's patting his cheek!"

"Whoopee!" shouted Ross, "Champe, I'll bet they——"

But Champe was racing down the steps. She met Aunt Missouri at the foot.

"It's all right," announced the elder lady with dignity, as she stepped from the buggy. "The mild widow's gone home, and I'm married. Sammy had the license, and it had to be used or spoil. Come right in, Sammy dear."

Champe was mute with amazement. Alicia, coming out, politely shook hands with her new relative. Mr. Claiborne received him less as a matter of course.

"I—I never suspected you of this, Wimberly," he complained. "I only offered you Missouri to help you out of a difficulty—I didn't say you might just have her to keep——"

The elder placed a pleading hand on his shoulder, and interrupted deprecatingly: "I've loved her all my life, Mr. Claiborne, and never dared to approach her. I shouldn't have ventured now, had she not betrayed her interest in me by her bravery today. She—she must care for me."

"Oh, I don't know," said Missouri's father, with a sense of personal wrong. "I guess she was persuaded into it to save that license. She'd do anything as a matter of economy."

"Claiborne, she—she paid that creature's railroad fare home out of her own money. I heard her bargaining with the ticket-agent, and she drew it mild. She gave up to him. She paid all he asked."

"She did, Sam! Are you sure?"

"All my life's happiness depends on my assurance of that fact."

"Then you're right. She loves you; and I yield—I yield." He looked at the lank old man only a few years his junior, but smiling and glowing like a young bridegroom. "You—" he began, "you may call me—father."



HEAVEN

By John Vance Cheney

THERE will be disappointment, I dare say,
But heaven's worth building, plan it as we may.
Mine toward the Arabs' humble notion tends—
The place of our young years and our old friends.

FOR HIS TOWN'S SAKE

By Seumas MacManus

NAOS O'GORMAN, the young blacksmith, was a silent, but kindly-hearted giant. An ardent sportsman, he had the surest eye that ever glanced along the gun-barrel. A stranger might easily have named him unsociable.

Not so, however, his comrades, the young men of Carnmoney. They thought him the most sociable of the world's good fellows; for always, when their day's work was over, and on Winter days when they could not work, his smithy never lacked for a band of "the boys," who, with the red firelight dancing on their comely countenances, stood around in earnest converse about that which was nearest their hearts, and, in those days, highest their lips—their country's cause; close watching, the while, the sledge blows that Naos beat alternately with his assistant Hugh upon the glowing iron.

They treated Naos—big, broad-shouldered, slow-spoken, taciturn Naos—with admiring awe. Though he hearkened to all, he seldom spoke in turn. Still, in their minds, he was most sociable. Nowhere could they, with such ease to themselves, and satisfaction, discuss great things, as in the presence of the blacksmith. His hammer, constantly loud-ringing on the anvil, eloquently filled to them his part in the smithy discourse. As homeward they wended their ways on a night on which one sentence had not fallen from the lips of the grave young smith, any of the boys would have been very much surprised—momentarily incredulous—if informed that Naos had not entirely directed the

discourse. Hugh MacAuley, Naos's assistant, had, probably, said more than any other there; yet it was hardly remembered that poor Hugh had spoken.

With the women, too, it was as with the men: for Hugh, attractive-looking young fellow though he was—with the attractiveness that is ever begotten of a sincere heart, and ardent nature—failed, after five years' wooing, to make the desired impression upon Mary MacElhatton, whose heart Naos O'Gorman had completely captivated, without effort as it seemed. Yet was Mary's a heart worth winning, daring all dangers on the globe's round.

In their country's checkered career a crisis was approaching. Everyone felt it. The boys knew it. They looked forward eagerly, hopefully and joyfully; hopefully and joyfully because, alas! they looked forward not far enough. These boys' hearts, in love with the ideal, beat high, even for heart of youth; and of desire begot conviction. Hope, beautiful Hope, glowed in the atmosphere of the forge those days, and lit the young men's faces with a light that shamed that of the bellows-blown flame.

When, while Antrim was still unprepared, the secret, glad tidings of the coming Rising arrived in Carnmoney, lightening the eyes and loosening the tongues of the ardent, uncalculating boys of the forge, Naos, who was far-seeing, suddenly paused from beating a half-finished shoe, leaned upon his sledge, looked eagerly, earnestly at the lads, and said to them:

"Boys, for God's sake don't talk

foolish. They that hold us down were never in better fettle for givin' us another crushin' than they are the day. Boys, 'tis the wrong time. Let us not throw away our lives. For God's sake, boys, let us not!"

The boys had never before heard the blacksmith's voice weaken to appeal. They were at first surprised, and then astounded. They spoke up in remonstrance. Naos, who had gone on with his work, only shook his head in reply. At length, when they had, to their own complete satisfaction, shown the absurdity of his argument, they laughed at the matter, and turned again to castle-building.

Those were the days when came the mysterious stranger flitting from house to house, and from village to village under friendly cover of night, and the belated singer who gave not all his songs to the dubious wind of day, and the peddler who bore in his boots news long looked for, and orders eagerly awaited, and in his pack goods better than ever Webster wove, and which were fingered now with immeasurably more delight. In the hearts of the hills hidden forges were in full blast through dead of night, and a thousand anvils made merry music as Death and Life in mutual despite there met and beat their lightsome carols on them. The eyes of the young men glistened and shone those days, their hail was jubilant, and their step buoyant as they trod to their secret trystings.

At length, after some weeks, which to the boys seemed some years, the glad final word came.

"Tomorrow!"

They stood their pikes by their bed-heads that night. And the first ray that the morning sun shot over Slieve Cruach kissed a hundred of these bright treasures, borne by tall fellows who, with much impatient bustle and many a cheery cry to comrade, met, hurried to and fro on the village street of Carnmoney.

"To Antrim! to Antrim town!" rang on the lips of all. And when, all ready, they lined up under their captain, the admiring eyes of the girls upon them, and the envious eyes of too-young

youths, and youths too old, Naos O'Gorman was missed. (It was Mary MacElhatton, indeed, who first missed him.) Off to find him scurried a couple of the boys; the ranks of the host delayed for his coming. To their surprise he was found in his smithy even at this early hour, busily beating out horseshoes.

"Naos," they asked, "what do you mean by this, and the boys standing on the street with their pikes on their shoulders?"

Naos, who had nodded greeting to them, only replied, "I mean, boys, that I have a long day's work before me."

His friends started. "Do you mean that you don't take gun or pike to Antrim with the boys?" They were not forgetful of the wonders he could work with the gun.

"I mean that."

Naos was hammering away at the half-formed horseshoe as he spoke. The messengers, confounded, turned and went disconsolately to their fellows with the news. The boys believed Naos had taken leave of his senses. Mary MacElhatton, when she heard it, dropped on the steps of her cottage. Hugh MacAuley sprang from the ranks to bring her solace.

"My God," said Naos's poor old father, "wait till I see him!"

He hobbled to the forge, and with the tears in his eyes, cried:

"Naos! Naos! Aren't you taking your pike and goin' with the boys?"

"Father," said Naos, without raising his head, "I've got my work to do."

"For God's sake, Naos, the boys'll think—they'll think——"

"Father," said Naos, now resting his hammer, and raising his head, and speaking almost sternly, "father, do I care what they'll think? I do the work that calls me, and fear what no man thinks."

His father staggered backward a few steps, and leaned his shoulder against the wall, covering his face with his hands.

At that moment Mary MacElhatton, wild-eyed, burst in at the door, fol-

lowed by several of Naos's comrades. Naos hastily lifted his head, and then took a step forward, meeting Mary, who, putting her hands upon his shoulders, looked into his face with pathetic appeal. She only said, "Naos!" but the word rang from her heart.

Naos laid a hand gently on Mary's shoulder, saying, "Mary, you don't understand."

"Naos," the girl said, "won't you go to Antrim?"

"Mary, you aren't well. You must go home."

"Naos, Naos, aren't you going to Antrim?"

"Dear Mary," he said tenderly, "you don't understand. I couldn't make you understand just now. Go home, Mary dear, and rest. I am not going to Antrim. I am staying at my anvil."

He let his hand drop from Mary's arm upon which it had rested. Mary turned, in silence making her way through the group of perplexed ones who thronged the door. Naos kept his eyes on her. Ere she had passed from the doorway wherein for a moment she had paused, gazing at her feet, he suddenly started forward, recoiled again, seized an almost completed horseshoe, thrust it deep into the coals, and leaned upon the bellows-shaft, blowing the fire to the fiercest flame. The boys, gathered within the door, had remained motionless—even, it might well be, speechless—for the space of nearly a minute. Then one of them sprang forward. It was Hugh MacAuley. With clenched fists and flashing eyes he was standing by Naos's side. The latter lazily turned his head and observed him. "Well, Hugh?" was all he said.

"Naos O'Gorman, I want to tell you—I want to tell you—here before your comrades and mine, that you are—a coward—a coward—not a man!"

The color swept out of Naos's face, and, visible to all, a tremor ran through his frame. His arm forgot to release the bellows-shaft which was held at its lowest point when Hugh MacAuley spoke the word. Hugh, every nerve

and muscle in his body at terrible tension, remained looking defiant contempt in the eyes of his master, who had leaned his body backward from him as one would instinctively recoil from a crouching panther. The astounded boys at the door threw swift glances, one to the other.

"Hugh!" ejaculated the man at the bellows. "A coward, and not a man!"

Into Naos's face the blood swept again with a swift rush. He drew himself erect; and in the eyes of the marveling onlookers his immense proportions seemed in an instant to grow greater; and they sympathetically trembled as he looked down upon little Hugh—little, but undaunted—defiant still. He towered, terrible—so it seemed to those who watched—over Hugh, who bravely budged not.

"A coward!" rang out Hugh's voice again, "and not a man!"

Hugh's fellows gasped. Out of Naos's countenance the tense expression it had taken on slowly disappeared, his arms fell by his side.

"Well, Hugh," he said, "maybe, maybe." He turned slowly, took hold of the bellows-shaft again, and began to blow.

"No Irishman!" said Hugh, "no man!" Then he let his muscles relax, dropped his arms, turned on his heel and strode through the door. After him went his comrades, only pausing on the threshold to cast one pitiful glance over their shoulders at Naos.

The captain of the little band of rebels gave the word to march; and, just as they started off, out behind their ranks stepped Naos's old father, a gun on his shoulder, and bravely began to trudge with them. Several old men instantly ran to hold him—women, too. He angrily resented the interference, struck off with his elbows those who caught hold of him, and glared fiercely at them. The company of pikemen was halted, and the old man with his gun, by force, returned to his own home.

As they passed the forge, the quick ring of hammer on anvil sounded loudly in their ears. Each man then

fixed his eyes afar, and took on a grimmer look. Some of Naos's closest, most loving comrades bit their lips till the blood came. None glanced through the forge door. Naos lifted not his head to look out. The boys had been long anticipating the joy that would be theirs on the morning of going out to battle for their country. But, now it was come, they knew no joy.

Their tramp, tramp, tramp, made melancholy music, indeed, on the morning air as they went cheerless, silent.

When they were a mile from the village they observed, ahead, a girl, with gun in hand, waiting by the wayside. It was Mary MacElhatton, they found. They looked at her in wordless wonder. She cast down her eyes under the gaze of the company. She said, "Boys, I am waiting to fill the one gap in your ranks."

"Mary, a stor," the captain said, "are you mad?"

"Not mad," calmly she replied, "but meaning to do his duty for Naos O'Gorman."

Hugh MacAuley had sprung forward from his place and was at her side. "Mary a theagair," he said, "go home. Come home with me: I'll follow up and overtake the men again before they get into the fight."

"No, Hugh, I don't go home. I go to Antrim with all of ye. From I was a child, the heart within my heart has always longed that I might do something for Ireland. This is the great day. I must go with ye."

All entreaties were vain. Mary, tender and gentle though she usually was, was now immovable.

"Then walk by me," Hugh said. And accordingly, by his side, in the very second rank, she took her place, to march on Antrim with the boys. The hearty cheer that greeted Mary when, shouldering her gun, she stepped into her place magically dispersed the gloom that had lain so weightily over them. Their step was firm, their faces bright, and hearts light—as should have been. Now they heard the birds

chanting songs of hope from the hill-sides as they went.

II

THAT day was an anxious one in the village of Carnmoney. No one worked; no one cooked meals; people ran from house to house, or wandered restlessly up and down, or gathered in knots to speculate on the chances of the fight. And, constantly, light-footed messengers were running from the village to the top of the near-by height, scanning the far ridge where it was lost among the hills, and running back again to tell that there was no sign of the longed-for courier yet.

It was wrong to say that no one worked. Naos O'Gorman's anvil was heard ringing all day. Naos was working steadily, stolidly. He had barely lifted his head since Hugh MacAuley and his friends quitted the village in the early morning. He turned from fire to anvil, industriously hammered out the yielding metal there; from anvil back to fire, thrust in the metal, heaped the coals, and blew the bellows, repeating this interminably.

Toward evening a youth burst into the forge and cried out with a heart-wrung wail:

"They're beat! Oh, Mother of God, they're beat!"

A convulsion jerked Naos's frame and twisted his features—only momentarily, however. He stooped immediately and picked up in the tongs the shoe that had been shaken from his grasp, thrust it in the fire and blew the bellows with deliberation. The sound of women's wails breaking the holy calm of Carnmoney reached his ears through the open door, and he heard the hasty voices of many, and the noise of a hundred pairs of feet that on the village street hurried hither and thither.

He was again blowing the bellows when another breathless messenger, flying past, thrust in his head, screamed, "The Yeos are ridin' on Carnmoney!" and was gone. At the hear-

ing of the dread intelligence Naos lazily lifted his eyes, in time only to catch a glimpse of the disappearing messenger. He as lazily dropped his eyes again, and leisurely continued his work, seemingly taking little heed of the terrible excitement whose sounds surged in at the forge door in frequent, fast-flowing waves.

Then came the sound of a galloping steed upon the stony street.

"The boys are beat and broken, kilt or scattered to the winds!" was cried aloud in piercing voice. "A score of the bloody Yeos are comin' on Carnmoney! The soldiers' colonel can't keep them in hand. When the brutes come here may God have mercy on yous, people of Carnmoney!—Unless the Glenmornan men, who didn't get in time the word to rise, arrive. I am hurryin' to hasten them. God guard yous!"

The clatter of hoofs rang out suddenly and swept onward, the receding sound being quickly drowned in the awful uproar that for a minute settled and rose again without.

All this time Naos was giving the nice finishing touches and taps to a horseshoe, his alternate blows on shoe and on anvil making stern music. Now and again he raised the shoe, examining it with the careful eye of the true smith who diligently seeks for symmetry.

"The Yeos! the Yeos! the bloody Yeos! Naos O'Gorman! There's twenty of them just now ridin' up the Brae!"

Tongs and shoe dropped from his hand; he hurried out of the forge door and into the open door of his father's dwelling, looping the end of his apron in the waist-string as he went. He came out of his father's door again immediately, bearing a gun. His father sprang to hold him; two women ran forward and laid hands on him also; others hurried to help these.

"Father," he said in a voice that was almost stern, "stand off me! Stand off, Kate! And you Mrs. Mac-Aluinn!"

"Don't, don't!" they said. "Are

you mad? You'll be shot like a dog. We'll offer them civility, and claim their mercy."

"Their mercy! The mercy of the yeomen!" Naos laughed a laugh that startled them.

"Like a dog! With God's help I shall shoot some dogs first." With eyes bent on those who opposed him he patted his gun, with a fierce fondness. "In this is the only tongue that can beg mercy of the Yeos, with chance of success. Stand off me!"

He threw back both arms, cast off the pleading ones who, now seeing the head of the first yeoman appear over the ridge just beyond the village, fell further back, crouching in fear against the side-walls of the houses.

But Naos was on one knee in the centre of the street, with gun against his cheek. Along the barrel ran his glance, taking nice aim at the rising figure—calm and collected as if he knelt at target practice. The distance was short, for the street descended from him abruptly to the long, narrow bridge, and the brae beyond rose steep to the horsemen. He fired, and a yeoman fell. In a short space three others appeared rapidly rising over the ridge. Their horses were spurred to a gallop. They had their carbines unslung. They stopped on the ridge-line, and took aim, all three, at the solitary figure on the village street.

Naos was before them; he had reloaded his gun. Another man came down. A girl, here arriving in wild haste down the street, snatched from him his empty gun and in his hands put a loaded one. Naos shot a hasty glance at the girl. It was Mary Mac-Elhatton—back from Antrim. She proceeded to reload the discharged gun. Two shots whistled in the air off over their heads. Naos took very deliberate aim and fired. A horse reared, turned, collided with its comrade, which suddenly wheeled, dashing its rider to the ground, and fled wildly, followed by its mate. Half a score of Yeos now spurred up the ridge, halted and fired a volley at the man on the village street, now aiming yet again.

Naos's aim wavered not. Then his gun spoke, and a saddle was empty. Yet another time he drew trigger, and a yeoman, dropping carbine, clasped wildly the neck of his horse—which reared, wheeled and shot madly away. Eventually the leader put spurs to his horse and dashed bravely forward, down the long brae. Three with a cheer sprang after. Ere they had come thirty yards the leader reeled, his horse stood still; and his comrades, catching hold of their chief, rode back with him over the ridge, behind which all the yeomen now disappeared.

When they reappeared there again a very few minutes later, with larger numbers, a shelter had been thrown up on the village street in front of the blacksmith. He had knelt there, gun on knee, and eye fixed upon the ridge-line, indifferent to, or oblivious of, its erection. Three pairs of hands were behind the barricade busily priming and loading and passing firearms to him.

More than a dozen in number, the yeomen halted in a mass on the hilltop, shouldered their guns, and swept the street with a volley. Part of it struck the barricade; part flew high above. Three of their number were put out of combat ere, after firing, they dashed forward. A fourth came down before their horses had taken a dozen bounds. Naos handed to Mary the last empty gun and grasped a fresh one. But this one dropped from his hand immediately, going off as it struck the ground. Mary MacElhatton looked up, just in time to see Naos, his lips tight shut, his face pale and very, very grim, topple over.

At the very same instant those whose eyes were, with fearful fascination, fixed on the onrushing terror, beheld the Yeos suddenly pull their animals

on their haunches. A deafening roar was raised in their rear, at the top of the street, and then a thundering clatter of feet.

The gallant men of Glenmornan had come.

In a cot in the mountains, several days later, Mary MacElhatton was sitting by the bedside of Naos O'Gorman, whose eye was bright, though his cheek was now colorless. She had a hand upon Naos's head. Hugh MacAuley was standing by the bedside, looking gravely down upon Naos.

"The minute I heard you could be seen," Hugh was saying, "I hurried here, for me conscience gave me no rest."

Naos, smiling, said softly: "How is that, Hugh, my friend?"

"That," said Hugh, with indignation in his voice, "I should have dared even to think you—*you*—a coward!"

Naos smiled up at him.

"You are a man," said Hugh, "a rare man—a man worthy of Mary MacElhatton." Hugh reached a climax. He added, "May the good God bless and prosper ye both!"

Naos extended his hand to Hugh, and he said: "I am only proud of you, Hugh, for what you did. You spoke for your country's sake."

"Yes," said Mary, laying her hand upon the arm of Hugh, who cast down his eyes and blushed. "Brave Hugh fears nothing in his country's cause," she said. "For your country's sake, you, Naos," turning loving eyes upon him, "have proved yourself a hero."

"A hero am I, Mary?" queried Naos lovingly, and laying a hand upon her cheek. "If I am that, Mary my heart, I'm afeared it was for my town's sake."



WHEN we are not worrying about what we haven't we are worrying about what we have

March, 1907—7

THE QUEST OF CARROLTON CADIZ

By Frederic Marsden

J CARROLTON CADIZ was loved of the ladies, from the time when a youngster he played
• In Washington Square with the babies that were sent out in the sun with a maid;
But early grown critical, most analytical his infant deductions would be:
"The fact that I play with these neighbors each day doesn't prove them quite worthy of me."

While at college he talked with and boated and walked with a charming co-ed under twenty,
Who knew more historical facts, oratorical, than he did himself—which were plenty;
She could talk on psychology, science, theology, but though deeply smitten, quoth he,
"Though highly effectual, most intellectual, I doubt if she's worthy of me."

With a family tree and a long pedigree and a fortune that touched on the millions,
Upon graduation he soon took his station in Gotham's exclusive cotillions.
Maid, widow and mother fell over each other to secure him for dinner or tea,
But at marital hints he would think, with a wince, "She is scarcely quite worthy of me."

The maidens exclusive, patrician, elusive, whose incomes exceeded the Czar's,
He studied while dining, while dancing, while wining, while yachting and whizzing in cars,
And despite each attraction, the selfsame reaction would cause J. C. Cadiz to flee.
As he mused, "While they're beautiful, loving and dutiful, I doubt if they're worthy of me."

Till at last at a latter day matinée, Saturday, whilst the sextette to ceiling and dome
Was insisting once more in the seventh encore that a few like themselves were at home,
He suddenly realized that the idealized maiden the third from the right
Meant heaven or hades to one J. C. Cadiz—and the star introduced them that night.

Well, lest the tale falter, 'twas his for the altar (he had fears she'd elope with an actor),
Since with Thorley and Huyler he failed to beguile her, and Tiffany couldn't attract her;
She laughed at and flouted him, rooted him, scouted him, hurled him from bliss to despair,
Till all that he knew was that just where her shoe was the heart of C. Cadiz was there.

When the time came at last when she spoke of the past with joy the assurance
he drank

That somewhere or other her father and mother were doing an act in a tank;
As a mere little maid as a mermaid she played—oh, always a dutiful daughter;
While mama like a carp did a stunt with a harp and papa smoked cigars under
water.

He murmured, "How stunning!" and "Awfully cunning!" when she spoke with
all adequate feeling

Of the joy of those nights when she'd donned her pink tights and sung a love-
song on the ceiling;

She spoke of divorce as a matter of course—just a thing that was bound to occur,
And the heart of C. Cadiz grew faint as a lady's as he thought, "Am I worthy
of her?"

Well, have no delusion about the conclusion—he went down on his knees then
and there;

With bell, book and candle they sidetracked a scandal and moved down to
Washington Square;

"They lived on the Square like a true, married pair" (it's Kipling's, that
foregoing speech),

And found through the honeymoon, money moon, funny moon, that each was
quite suited to each.

THE MORAL of this is that what a man wishes he is apt soon or later to miss;

When Fate has her way with you then it's all day with you, and hence the con-
clusion is this:

Don't waste time in looking, in seeking, in booking the maiden that's worthy
of you,

For sooner or later 'tis Love is dictator, and you'll do what he wants you to do.



NO DANGER

DOCTOR—In time, this trouble will affect your mind.

FAIR PATIENT (*in tone of relief*)—I was afraid it would compel me to give
up society.



BEHIND THE PALMS

"MONEY talks."

"Yes; and sometimes it makes mistakes of grammar."

THE WHITE RAMPARTS

By Cecil Carlisle Pangman

FARRELLTON was occupied in idly removing the frost from the window-pane with his finger-nail. The delicate spirals and whorls of the fairy tracery disappeared under the quiet, relentless attack, and a forest of interlacing tropical foliage was slowly blotted out. He had no particular object before his mind; no curiosity to look upon the landscape which the renewed transparency would show him. It would present itself, down to every smallest detail, as he had last seen it the previous afternoon, before the merciful shadows hid it. He hated it with the hate which goes linked with fear, only the dreary, inhospitable ugliness behind him drove him to turn elsewhere in a sort of desperation.

The same desolate snow-bound country opened up before his inquisitive fingers as, inch by inch, he removed the kindly veil which had sheltered his eyes; the outlook his very soul had come to loathe. The same rugged, imprisoning hills with their huddled, beaten trees and the farther mountains, old and bleak; the gray, cold light of unbroken cloud, no glint of sun or promise of any to come; the narrow valley falling away steeply beneath him, with its little cluster of cottages smothered almost to extinction under the load of snow heaped upon them, with only a slender column of smoke rising here and there, gray against gray, to give evidence that this cruel wilderness held others prisoners besides himself.

For a week now he had looked out upon this same view, until a great weariness had possessed him to the

very depths, and his power of self-control and quiet endurance seemed to pass away from him. Morning after morning since his coming he had been tempted sorely to turn his face to the wall and refuse to rise from his bed any more, and yet he had still been able to force himself to get up and front life standing upon his feet. Strength and purpose and resolution are undermined and weakened if one hugs one's pillow, and, once the cold was boldly faced, it rewarded its challenger by stimulating him and breathing hopeful thoughts into him. So Farrellton had fought with himself and now stood by the window looking over every foot of the sickeningly familiar country, and then wheeled slowly about on his heel to get full measure again of the hopeless discomfort behind him.

The room was a large one and seemed even larger, because of its scanty stock of furniture and its walls of varnished wood. A dull square of carpet made an oasis of faded color in the midst of the desert of the floor, and an iron stove of unparalleled ugliness, filled almost to bursting with dry pine-wood slabs, was gradually increasing the temperature of the room to a habitable fitness. Farrellton smiled grimly at the blank desolation about him as his eyes fell upon the large trunk standing in one corner still unstrapped, which contained much that would enable him to increase his comfort. A few pictures, some gay cushions, a table-cover, books and magazines, a photograph or two, all pitiful salvage from his apartment in town, would redeem much of the

bareness and waste, and yet he had never had the energy to unpack them; or, rather, had obstinately and steadfastly refused himself such alleviation as they offered, and had lived the week through, barren of all consolation.

This attitude he had assumed interested him hugely, and being so bereft of any distraction to help lighten his spirits, he maintained it, so that part of him would stand on one side, as it were, quite as an onlooker at the game, detached and uninfluenced, and smile at the strange things the rest of him did in a sort of pitying contempt. Kicking against the pricks is an unsatisfactory occupation at best, and the spectator usually derives more amusement from it than the actor. He wondered vaguely at times where this odd whim of a dual personality, thus separate and distinct, would lead him if he persisted in, but then, he would soon be well again and back once more amidst the engrossing excitements of the life he had been forced to leave for a while, and he need fear no danger. It would all be far behind him and forgotten then.

He turned back to the window again restlessly to complete clearing the glass, but found the heat of the room had finished the slow work of his fingers, and the frost had vanished from off the pane in little streaks of water. He could see a stray figure now and then walking along the road below and over the ridge behind the snow-laden trees, but no one ever turned off at the narrow pathway that wavered and struggled up the hillside through the drifts to his cottage, nor did he expect or hope for anyone. He had not spoken to a soul since his arrival, excepting the local doctor and the ancient woman with whom he lived, and knew only of the presence of like unfortunates to himself from such gossip as filtered from her when she served his meals. He himself had only ventured out a few times, compelling his tired body to struggle up and down the steep hills so that an accusing conscience should not blame him for a too tame submission and

shame his manhood; but his spirit had weakened gradually of late with the weakening of the flesh under the burden of dark days and the pitiless cold, and he had kept almost entirely in the shelter of his room.

For one long week now he had watched and waited for some sign of sympathy and pity, and some vision of a providence conscious and careful of him, some evidence of interest in him in his utter loneliness; until that day he would have accepted the slightest hint of such with thankfulness and built up a strong and beautiful tower of hope upon a foundation of the merest suggestion. Self-reliant, self-sufficient in his troubles he had always been, but his spirit had been worn down in this cold, leaden world. A gleam of sun across the white, deathly wastes of snow—how it would glorify and exalt the earth! Every icicle hanging from the roof would then become a sword of prismatic fire, every frosted pane a glowing fabric of wondrous design and beauty; the very drifts would lose their suggestion of cold weight and eternal durability, and the powder sifting from the swaying branches would float down the wind in diamond dust. Just one break, he prayed, in the even coverlet of cloud that swung low from the crests of the encircling mountains, to let in one ray of warmth and light and color from beyond, and he would fight hopefully and play his appointed part bravely.

But no least sign was given him. His sober reason warned him of the weakness, the criminal slackness of giving way to such an idea, but a sudden revolt swelled up within him at the neglect of his simple petition, the scorning of his humble need, and he turned away to commence pacing up and down the room with hurried, uncertain steps. A dull, unreasoning anger possessed him, vague, yet all-embracing, firing every sluggish vein; the shadow of it became hate and enveloped all mankind. God had forgotten him, and his friends had made no sign. His little part in the world

had been quickly filled and the place thereof knew him no more.

Farrellton knew the idiocy of this attitude, for railing merits no compensation. When he should become calmer he knew, also, that he would be sorry and revile himself in no measured terms for having weakened so pitifully; but for the present he let his wrath have free rein and warmed his chilled spirits into a fine, furious glow. Again—his friends had made no sign. What if he had left the city secretly and in haste and crawled away alone after sentence had been pronounced? If they had wanted him they could have found him.

Raddigan, the doctor, had been a brute. "You've fancied you were imperishable, and you pay the penalty of such foolish fancies, as every man, woman and child has to do. You've worked your body as you would not permit any dumb animal to be worked, and it's fallen down on the hill. You needn't lash it, because it can't get up and pull its load. Take it out of the shafts and away to 'green pastures' and see if you can bring it back to its proper healthful fitness again. Mind, I don't promise anything, for you're badly broken."

So Raddigan had counseled, and also the other doctors whom, in his stubborn unbelief, he had visited. He had had to drop his work and drop it at once, and the "green pastures" prescribed were these cold, white hills, where a little colony of the stricken fought with death alone, and strove to win his way back to his squandered heritage. And Raddigan's non-committal words hung over him like a dark shadow.

A realization of his helplessness and impotency, whirled along in Fate's resistless tides, calmed the wildness of his anger, but it served, also, to concentrate it in one direction or channel with no lessening of force and virulence. He had had a hard life—things had gone against him always, from the very start. Time and again he had been battered and bruised and flung down and had come back into

the arena again to try another grapple with Fortune. He had fought fairly always for his own hand, asking no favor, expecting none, and had met only defeat and retreat. Now, this was the hardest and the heaviest blow; he was down and out for the time being, and he knew it; but if life saw fit to use him so hardly, so unjustly, he would retaliate on his more fortunate fellows, those who had prospered where he had failed, profited by his misfortunes, and even the score a little, somehow. He swiftly realized what weapon had been given into his hand and thanked "whatever gods there be" that such a balancing and rectification was yet in his power.

Across his mental horizon loomed the figure of Bowditch, increasing momentarily until all else was blotted out; Bowditch, who carried upon his head the sins of all who had transgressed against Farrellton, and who should therefore pay for all. There was no subtle reasoning about it; no attempt to justify his attitude. Bowditch had scored most heavily against him, and Bowditch, as was right and fitting, should suffer first. And Margaret, then—what of Margaret? Margaret would probably get hurt. Well; he was sorry for that, but it couldn't be helped, that's all. Bowditch had dealt him the heaviest and most grievous blow in taking Margaret from him, and it was wonderfully just and proper that, through Margaret herself, he should be able to return the stroke.

He smiled bitterly beneath the hand that plucked at his ragged mustache. Margaret would get hurt between them, he supposed—Margaret, whom he loved and had always loved with all the heart and truth left in him; the one and only woman in all the world; the one who had always been as "rest and dreams to him—soft sea and pearls." The single, bright redeeming glory in his dull, hard life, shedding its radiance into all dark secret corners, was that she should have given him her friendship and intimacy, even though she had passed from him to another.

Bowditch—damn him! He had

known her first, they had been good comrades long before Bowditch had come into her life to tempt her away with the story of his great possessions, and how was it possible for her to care for Bowditch, her husband! But Bowditch had everything, and he nothing, and no abiding prospects besides, so Bowditch had won in this as in all other things he attempted.

He didn't blame her for that, God knows; a lone woman fighting for her own hand amid the perils and darkness of the city when the harbor of Bowditch's money and place shone out brightly to her. If she could have waited just a little, perhaps, he might have been able to offer her as safe and sure a haven himself. Fortune could not always pass him by; some one or other of his hazards must surely be successful and bring him in his thousandfold; some venture must at last come homing with heaped galleons in its train. Yes, it was certainly too bad Margaret had to be mixed up in the trouble; he wished, fervently, it could have been some other woman, but, as things were, it couldn't be helped.

His thoughts swung in a wide ellipsis back to the same point, through all the vagaries and inconsequences of a mind slightly out of firm control through illness and disappointment and much trouble, and anchored firmly there. He would strike at Bowditch, that much was certain; he would not forego his fair revenge, and if Margaret stood between—well, it couldn't be helped, once more, that's all. He laughed harshly, bitterly. How exquisite was such retaliation as he planned, complete, overwhelming, falling with the suddenness of a bolt from Summer blue.

He moved swiftly over to the trunk and began unstrapping and unlocking it, cursing feverishly over the buckles which defied his feeble fingers, and when they at last yielded plunged his hand deep into one corner of it and brought out a leather portfolio. From this he drew a thin packet of letters—Margaret's letters. He sat down be-

side the table and spread them out before him. There were ten of them. He counted them slowly, then took up the top one and opened it. It had been written to tell him of her engagement to Bowditch; she hadn't dared to send for him and give him the news by word of mouth. It showed she felt guilty of having deceived him. He experienced again something of the crushing, numbing shock he had felt when he had first read it. Then the second one, telling of the hurried wedding, for she had arranged and timed it when he had been out of the city; and then the others, one by one at irregular intervals, when her life irked her in its unaccustomed environment, and her heart throbbed with longing for the old, wild, free days they had known together, before a man's hand had been set upon her soul. Bitter complaints she made, with a strange lack of reserve, ridiculing her husband unmercifully, and unfairly too; his ponderous respectability, his narrow middle-class rectitude, his gross imperviousness to the fine graces and beauties of life, she held up to scorn. Farrellton had been friend, comrade and counselor through the storm and stress of her hazardous venture in the city at earning her living by her pen alone; his love, unexpressed, but firmly constant, standing behind her to comfort through the hard, lonely, disappointing days, she had turned to the old bond of comradeship in her troubles, and had not scrupled, woman-fashion, to call upon the lover in him too—the lover who understood so completely and sympathized and cheered.

Turning these letters over he found with some surprise that the latest had been written about six months ago. They must have stopped then or he had lost the later ones, if there were any. He couldn't remember which it was; but then, that would make no difference. He had quite enough of them. Now Bowditch would hear what his wife really thought of him in secret; and more, what she had not scrupled to tell another—his wife,

whom he adored, on whom he lavished all the tributes of his wealth, power and position. It was common property among all men how Bowditch worshiped his wife, believing in her as everything that was fair and true and lovely and of good report, all of which things she was beyond any peradventure; yet the scorn and ridicule her laboring soul had poured into these letters in moments of fierce reckoning with the consequences of her hasty marriage, driven to it despairing, bruised and battered with the cruel handling received in her struggle for existence in the city, would crush him to the dust beyond all retrieving.

The abysmal cowardice, the traitorous meanness of such an action as he contemplated did not enter Farrelton's head. Bowditch stood for all he hated, all that had succeeded while he failed, and he could not forego this chance of retaliation.

He had never been able in his saner days to satisfy his honor or his conscience how he came to preserve these letters. They should have gone into the fire as soon as read—in fact, without reading, but he had been so hungry for her in his loneliness, day and night the thought of her had strengthened and uplifted him, and these intimate confessions of her dependence upon him still had comforted in the darkness beyond all telling. They were as a crown and an exceeding great reward to him; life could not be held as altogether a failure if he still possessed Margaret's confidence and regard, and he required the tangible evidence presented by the written word before him to buoy him up when deep waters went over his soul. The knowledge of it had smoothed rough places, made crooked paths straight, been as a light in a great darkness, and though the honorable man in him had kept him always scrupulously on his guard when he was with her, making no demands upon her, defending her name jealously from all possible breathing of criticism, he had, nevertheless, hugged the dear truth

closer because of the very restraint imposed.

But now had come the moment of his weakness when all barriers, all defenses were down; honor and faith and the tried bonds of comradeship fell away from him, and even Margaret must now become the weapon with which he should humble Bowditch. In the name of all fairness must he be expected to accept defeat again, forego this opportunity of showing Bowditch, in his smug complacency, how he had failed with Margaret, and how he, Farrelton, trampled upon and ignored, was still victor in the end, and with all the odds of wealth and power arrayed against him had yet snatched the crown for his own?

Farrelton carefully piled the letters one upon the other and tied a string about them, wrapped them up and addressed the package to Bowditch at his office. Then he got up, put more wood on the fire and strolled heavily across the room to the window once more. Still the unbroken clouds, the dull white expanse, the cowering houses and now the lone figure of a woman toiling along the road. Where the footpath to his cottage left the highway she appeared to pause uncertainly and look about. Farrelton watched uninterestedly the hesitation, the attitude of doubt and the apparent anxious need for direction, yet he was stirred to give an exclamation of surprise when he saw her leave the road and plunge into the scarce-trodden path, making painful progress upward through the heavy drifts. He began to worry impatiently because there was no one to stop her and save her the weary, exhausting climb, for she surely could not be intending to come to his cottage and would only have to be turned back again. Then a suggestion of something familiar made him catch his breath sharply and rub upon the glass, clouded with his breathing, to get a better view. He made several irresolute movements toward the outer hall and stopped short, retracing his steps to the window to look again, as though in doubt. When, at last, he

flung the front door open she stood before him on the steps.

Then suddenly he laughed; the extreme grotesqueness of the situation stirred him first of all.

"Margaret—you! Is it you, Margaret?"

His voice was no louder than a scared whisper, though her name seemed to echo and reverberate through all the silent passes of the hills. He stared at her, standing before her bareheaded in the open door, his brain whirling madly in amazement. He stooped mechanically and began brushing the snow from her skirt.

"Come in. Come in quickly, Margaret." A feeling that prompt action of some sort was necessary made him pull her inside and swing the door shut; an inexplicable anxiety to hide her before her coming to him was observed and shouted across the world.

"I—I—came to see you," she panted, leaning against the wall to recover some of her breath. "I wanted—I wanted to see you." She looked at him nervously.

"Where did you come from? What are you doing here? How did you find me?" The questions broke from him as he faced her, a bright color in his cheeks which the arctic air had driven into them. "Come into my room and explain. What brought you? You seem to have dropped from the clouds. I can't believe it's really you."

Back in his own room, the door safely closed, he turned upon her, his pulses hammering madly in his throat until he thought he must choke. It seemed to his excited imagination as though all the world must be ringing with her action; scornful fingers pointing, whispered sneers and covert glances, and he felt that he must, therefore, protect her from whatever consequences might follow.

She was as much moved as he was and seemed on her part to have nothing to say. She looked about the room swiftly, crossed hurriedly to the window and back again, grasping the full measure of its bareness and harsh discomfure, looked out upon the bleak wastes

of snow, the imprisoning hills and beaten trees, and when she turned to him at last her eyes were bright with tears and her voice halted uncertainly.

"Has it always been like this? Isn't it awful? How have you endured it? Oh—I am so—so sorry! I've come to help you if I can. There must be something I can do!"

Farrellton was slowly getting a grip again on his faculties and exercising some control.

"Oh, it's not so very bad when you're used to it—as I am now. Thanks, all the same, though. I'm getting quite to like the place now."

He was busily engaged in stuffing the stove full again, and the heat striking up in his face gave sufficient excuse for the flush of color which flooded his face and neck suddenly at the flagrant lie. He never could lie to Margaret, somehow, and he felt himself detected and resented the look in her wide, candid eyes.

"Thanks ever so much for looking me up," he went on stiffly. "It's very good of you, indeed. You haven't told me yet how you found me out."

"Dr. Raddigan told me he thought you were here, and I had to come to see for myself how you were getting on." She laughed nervously, to cover a deeper feeling. "You see—you—well, I knew nobody would be up here with you, and the loneliness must be awful—though you were always a lonely soul—and I felt I must come."

"Dr. Raddigan had no business to tell anyone," Farrellton broke in ungraciously.

"I got it out of him; it wasn't his fault. But it was kind of you, I must say, to go away as you did and never let me know anything about it. Surely, I had a right to know—I, at least, for old time's sake. And you'll very soon make me think you wished I hadn't come at all—that you're not glad to see me."

"Glad—of course I'm glad to see you," Farrellton replied, looking up with a stick of firewood in each hand. "I need hardly tell you that, surely. You came up on the morning train, I

suppose. Would you believe there could be such a howling wilderness within a few hours of the city if you hadn't seen it with your own eyes?"

"Why did you come here, then? Why not have gone to a sanatorium at one of the big, well-known places, where there is plenty to do and see and lots of people about?"

"I came here because I didn't want lots of people about, and because—" Farrellton had his back to her, busily pretending the stove still required his services—"because—well, because I had to, that's all. I—I haven't the money to waste just now and I don't know how long I may have to stay." The confession of his poverty wrecked and tore at the foundations of his pride. "The air is as good here as anywhere, and I'm getting a good rest," he wound up stubbornly.

Margaret Bowditch came across the room to him slowly. They had both been fighting off the moment of explanation, fearing to touch upon and disclose the hidden springs of conduct; they had fenced and played with trivial things. Her voice was full of the tender inflections which had always moved his soul to the depths.

"If I could only tell you how sorry I am—so sorry, Dick. Only it isn't easy at all to sympathize with you. You never let me inside your shell, now. Must you be here long? What did Dr. Raddigan tell you? Are you really dangerously ill, do you think, or did he send you here merely for precaution's sake? Now—tell me. You must! I am your oldest friend, after all, and I've come all this way to find out if I can help."

He blocked her stubbornly. He would not look at her when he spoke.

"Thank you, Margaret. It's very good of you to think of me and take all this trouble, but you can't help any really. I'm getting better fast here and you'll see me back in my place before long. It's only because I'd been a bit careless about myself, I suppose, and Raddigan advised me to take a rest in the mountains. It isn't the least bit serious."

"And you are sure you are feeling better?" She came up close to him, compelling him to look at her, and watched his face intently. The doctor had told her more than he had Farrellton evidently, and the man saw pity and sorrow and a great sympathy in her eyes as he faced her, though he could not guess the reason. He puzzled her completely. He appeared to be steadily and swiftly building a wall between himself and her, shutting her out from him, and she felt she must break it down or overleap it before it grew too strong and high.

"You don't mind it here, then? You're not miserable and unhappy? It would kill me to be sent here all alone. Tell me the truth, Dick! You never lied to me before, and you wouldn't now."

"Of course, it's the truth, Margaret," answered Farrellton steadily. "I'm getting on all right here," though at the words a vague, formless shadow of fear swept across him. He sat down in the nearest chair hurriedly, because of a weakness which swam over him and his hand fell upon the packet of letters on the table beside him, which he had addressed to her husband.

His attitude amazed and mocked him in swift retrospection. Margaret Bowditch had come to him while he had been planning to pull down the fair structure of her life about her head in his wild effort to strike at her husband; had come with outstretched hands full of help and pity for him and an eager heart to cheer, and he found himself fighting her off, denying to himself her assistance and her sympathy because of a vague idea that her action might compromise and injure her with that same husband. Why, by merely allowing her to do so, could he not plant his blow at the other man even more cruelly and effectively than he had ever hoped to achieve by sending her letters? Yet, he felt tied, shackled and helpless, and his outraged pride whipped and spurred his manhood.

Margaret Bowditch had watched him keenly. Her plans had been fully laid, but he had given her no opportunity

to announce them, almost as though he anticipated them. He spoke at length, and she was startled to find how their thoughts jumped together.

"What are your plans, Margaret? There's only one train back to the city each day, and it goes at five o'clock. It isn't polite to suggest your going, of course, seeing that you've only just arrived, but it's a long, hard walk to the station, as you've no doubt discovered, and you'll have to start back in plenty of time. I'm afraid it's quite impossible to get anyone to drive you."

She did not answer for some minutes. His impersonal, distant attitude hurt her cruelly; he talked as though they had been the merest acquaintances, and she had come to pay him a polite visit of condolence over his affliction. She could not understand the veiled antagonism of his manner. She crossed the room to the window and stood there looking out, her fingers tapping gently on the pane. She wanted a moment's freedom from his persistent mocking gaze in which to try to sound the depth of the change in him. She nerved herself suddenly to turn round on him boldly.

"I'm not going, Dick," she announced calmly. "Not by today's train, nor by tomorrow's, nor on the day after tomorrow."

Farrellton's face paled swiftly, and his teeth closed on the oath nearly wrung from him. He tried to compose himself, to realize soberly what her speech meant, word by word, phrase by phrase, but could not fully comprehend all her meaning. Some part of his brain seemed to be adrift.

"Not going," he repeated vacantly, "not going! What do you mean, not going?"

"What I said," she replied, and faced back to the window again. "I'm going to stay here, in this house if I can get a room; if not, I can get one elsewhere in the village, I suppose. I intend to look after you and make you strong again. I'm going to see that you get proper food and take proper exercise. It's all a matter of food and

exercise, and you never had a decent respect for either at any time."

"You can't—you won't do any such thing, I say!" Farrellton broke out harshly, rising to his feet. "I won't have it—not for an instant! Do you know what you are saying and what your staying will mean—to others?"

"Yes, I understand all that perfectly," she answered calmly enough, although a faint flush flooded her face and died away, leaving her strangely pale. "But I'm going to stay just the same."

"I won't have it, I say." Farrellton's voice rose higher and harsher. "I won't! You don't know what it means! You can't come here and nurse me and leave your husband behind. Don't be silly, Margaret! Think what people will say. It—it isn't right," he concluded weakly.

"It doesn't matter to me if it's right or wrong," replied Margaret Bowditch. "You'll never pull up and get well if you go on as I know you've been doing here—so I'm going to stay here and see that you do."

"You won't be able to go back," he said stubbornly. "Suppose you do make me strong again—you can't ever go back to him. You can't ever explain. You'll lose everything you have, Margaret."

"Well, what of it?" she broke out with sudden heat. "I've thought over all that on the way up here. It just means that you'll die if you are left here alone, and that good nursing will pull you through—and—and you can't afford good nursing or proper care, I know, and you won't let me pay for them, so I am going to do it myself. Oh," she went on passionately, "Dick, I can't see you like this and not put out a hand. You've always been so much to me. You stood behind me for years and helped and advised and shielded, and how else can I pay my debt?"

"There is no debt! There is no debt!" Farrellton said. "It's a crazy, unbalanced thing to do, and there is no need for it, either. I can get along all

right alone. I'd rather, too," he added brutally.

He must assault and bruise her pride and break down her resolution, and with all possible speed, for the enticement of what she offered appealed to him cruelly, and he feared he could not offer a prolonged opposition. Every heart-string vibrated to the sound of her voice, his eyes were gladdened beyond all telling at the sight of her, every pulse responded to her presence. But he mustn't listen to her; for her sake he mustn't listen! He must make her go; anger her, insult her, anything, so that she would be forced to leave him before his defenses failed him.

Then a new feature occurred to him suddenly. He had looked upon her action as a sacrifice, because of his trouble; but, what if it was no sacrifice for her really. What if she did wish to leave her husband and cut herself loose from the life which had so irked her. Had not those very letters breathed of her discontent? What if she came to him because she wanted him, and counted the world well lost? Yes—but after! The mocking thought arose. Was he sure he would get well again? For how long, then, could he offer her protection and love and care? How many years or months or days had been allowed him, and was she to throw away those things the world holds desirable, and then find herself cheated, too, of him, and have to stand and face the old hard life again? How could he allow it?

The figure of Bowditch had faded away to nothingness; the horizon had eclipsed him. He forgot he had ever harbored an angry thought against him. He stared at her moodily, as he thus endured the warring of the spirit.

She had taken off her hat and furs and put them on the table beside him, and had then gone back to the window again, turning from him. Each one had grown suddenly afraid of the other and felt more comfortable with the room between them. The woman regained confidence and control first and was conscious of the need of action

of some sort to break through the suspense.

She noticed the open trunk and moved over to it quickly, guessing what it contained. She dragged forth some curtains, then a rug, and, woman-like, quickly converted the rickety, shabby lounge from an unspeakably awful thing to a restful, comfortable piece of furniture. The pictures and photographs she swiftly and effectively disposed about the room as fast as she unearthed them. His books and papers she arranged upon the table, and discovered at the bottom of the trunk his reading-lamp, which she deftly refilled from the dirty glass article standing on the mantel-shelf. The short Winter afternoon was waning swiftly and the chill dusk had fallen. The lighted lamp made a cheerful glow around, and the room was already metamorphosed. Margaret looked anxiously at the bare window; the dingy green roller-blind failed to give her satisfaction. Further rummaging brought to light a pair of warm-looking curtains, and, standing on a chair, these she promptly proceeded to hang upon the pole fortunately left in its place by some previous occupant of the room. Farrellton looked about him in amazement at the change.

There was no least suspicion of uncertainty or of hesitation in her actions; she had made up her mind to stay and her first proceeding had been to make him as comfortable as possible in the circumstances, as an earnest of what her presence would do. And how his heart ached as he watched her! He couldn't fight her off any longer; he must accept her service. It was asking too much of him or of any mortal man to refuse what she offered, and, broken by trouble, the sight was too enticing for his weakened spirit to turn away from. Well—let her stay; give her her own way, then! How good it was to think she would never go again; that his weary eyes would always rest on her, his outstretched hand find her ever beside him to soothe and comfort and restore. Oh, the hell of the past week! With her beside him to nurse and tend

and advise, he would regain his lost strength quickly, and they could go away quietly to some new country and begin life again together there.

How happy she seemed as she flitted softly about the room; how satisfied, how well-content. He could not drive her away, back to Bowditch, now that she had escaped; fling her back within her prison walls again.

He watched her contentedly as she worked busily at the curtains, then shifted his gaze to the pile of furs on the table at his elbow. Such furs as Margaret had always loved in the old days, when their possession had been as far beyond her slender means as the moon itself. The caressing softness of the sable stole, the warm silky richness of the seal-coat—how preëminently fitting and becoming they were to her dark, warm skin and her proud head lifting above them! These were the proper possessions of such a one as Margaret, the perfect setting and frame for her rare beauty. Such things were hers by right, and, with them, men-servants and maidservants and all the peculiar treasures of kings, because she was Margaret; and if Bowditch had thus been able to give them to her, then Bowditch was to be honored. How he himself had always longed for and dreamed of the power which might some day have been his to make her such gifts, clothe her with such riches, weight her with jewels—

"Gain him the gains of various men,
Ransack the ages, spoil the climes."

He had fought and struggled for money and power only because they would obtain such things for him to give her. How they had used to watch together those more favored in the old days, gazing at the boxes from the gallery, choosing the treasures they most fancied from outside the glittering display of the shop windows. Well—Bowditch had the power and had exercised it royally. Poor Bowditch, he would never see Margaret again! He was sorry for Bowditch, to have to lose her so suddenly and irrevocably.

He took her muff in his lap and began drawing his fingers across the fur,

softly ruffling and smoothing it. From one end hung the fingers of her gloves; he drew them gently out, and with them came an envelope which fell upon his knee. He picked it up swiftly, silently. It was unaddressed, unsealed. Margaret was still at work on the curtains with her back toward him. He noiselessly, warily, turned up the flap and drew out a sheet of paper, written upon in pencil, very probably in the train on the way up. Before his eyes fell intelligently upon one word he knew intuitively for whom it was meant.

MY HUSBAND:

You will never see me again, I hope, and when you know all you will hope so, too. I am leaving you to nurse a friend—an old, old friend who is fast sinking into the last stages of consumption, and who is too poor to pay for nursing and too proud to take help from anyone.

How strange it was these words administered no shock of surprise to him! He felt as though he had always known this truth about himself deep down in his heart, the truth about his hopeless condition; fearing to face it before, because he knew it was true and undeniable and not to be evaded or blotted out.

He read on:

I owe him everything—everything that made and kept me attractive to you, and I must pay the debt. His doctor told me definitely he couldn't last more than three months, but I must make those three months as easy as I can, and the only way to have him accept anything is to go to him and stay with him and care for him, breaking all ties with you. It's the only way any good can be done him, and, as I say, it's a debt I'm called upon to pay. There's no evading it, and I don't want to evade it. I cannot let him die poor and absolutely alone! You mustn't look for me, but give me up entirely and put me out of your mind forever. I couldn't go back to you when I am free again—even if you would permit it. You know what people would say; your people—they never liked me, and I could not go back and face them. You have been good and kind to me beyond all hope of my ever proving worthy. I only want you to know I am not ungrateful, and my keenest pain at leaving you is that I cannot show you that, nor can I ever tell you how happy you

It ended there. In a flash, a vivid, blinding flash—so keen, so sharp did it overwhelm his brain that Farrelton

almost thought it had been a visible, actual bolt cleaving the afternoon shadows, and listened expectant a moment for a thunderous peal—he realized the whole naked truth, the truth which Margaret had not fully grasped herself; she was only groping blindly toward it through the mists of misunderstanding. She could only write such a pitiful farewell to the man she loved. Ah, she loved Bowditch, then—there could be no mistaking that!—loved him, although she did not know it. But to his sharpened senses there could be no shadow of doubt; the truth was palpable, vivid, shining. Why had he not been given some warning? He had never conceived such a thing as probable or even possible. The blow made him writhe and strain physically, though he never moved a muscle, sitting rigid in his chair, lest he attract her attention. Raddigan's definite limit of three months had caused him no particular surprise or disturbance; he had felt all along, somehow, that something had been kept from him by the doctor. It was almost a relief to have it finally settled with the seal of authority.

But if Margaret knew this, how could she cut herself free from her husband and invite the consequences of a permanent estrangement from the man she loved, when the man she came to nurse could only last a few months at the outside? He would have to go out as appointed. Why, then, should she spoil her life to give him a few more days or a little ease? Bowditch was a proud, hard man, and her hasty, ill-considered action might work her irrevocable harm with him. They could never be sure that what she had done would not be known somehow, and spread abroad and talked about, and Bowditch would hear the unfavorable, the malicious, the uncharitable side of it. It was all too absurd really to happen, and yet there she was and he had no strength to oppose or overbear her manifest purpose, backed with all the energy and virility of her healthy body and vigorous personality. She would

wreck her life knowingly, foolishly, bravely, self-sacrificingly, uselessly, with a smile on her lips to cover the pain within, and he could not prevent her. He wished she wouldn't sing those soft little songs to herself as she worked, because she thought they would serve to convince him that she was happy and contented there, when all her heart must be with the man she had left.

She had at last succeeded in hanging the curtains to her satisfaction; she climbed down from her chair and went to the door to contemplate the effect of her changes in the room.

"Now, that looks ever so much better and more comfortable, Dick, doesn't it? You'll pick up a great deal faster, now, you'll see, and will soon be back at your work."

She laughed lightly, coming back to his side. How well she kept up the pretense of belief that he was going to get better again, and there was no trace in tone or feature of the sacrifice she had put herself through for him; if he had not known the inner truth he could never have told that she had broken her old life in two as one breaks a stick across one's knee, and faced the consequences fearlessly. He could not trust himself to speak, torn two ways between his manhood and his desires.

"The next thing will be to see about your meals, and as it's dark enough, anyway, for tea, I'll go and investigate what there is and see if I cannot make the same amount of improvement in comfort for you with your food as I have in the room. I'm sure you've been half-starved. Presently, Dick, you'll be quite glad I came."

She slipped quickly out in search of the landlady in the kitchen at the back of the house, and Farrellton was left alone.

It was as though a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. Free from her dominating influence he could assert himself. His mind whirled back into accustomed channels and control, and he could see his position clearly, unclouded by the glamour she had shed about him. Could he accept the

sacrifice she offered him so freely and so bravely? Could he endure the reproach which would assail him mercilessly day and night, if he permitted her to stay with him, and watched the end drawing relentlessly near and nearer—the end that would fling her out again into the world, unprotected and derided? Must he allow her to outdo him in generosity and take this at her hands? Could he not find some way to stop her and force her to go back to her husband before it should be too late? And what way was there open to him—except one?

He rose from his chair quickly, strong in his sudden decision, stung to immediate action. He stuffed the tell-tale letter back into her muff again; she must not know how it had betrayed her. The package of letters still lying on the table confronted him, and he swiftly crammed them into the stove. That was the end they should have found long since, months and months ago, so that the devil could not have tempted him so sorely. He heaved a sigh of relief as he heard the sudden flames roar around them. Now, he must get out and away—far away where she could neither follow him nor find him. She had found him out once, but this time he would hide himself better and no one could betray his hiding-place.

He left the room softly, stole across the hallway to the door, pulled it open and stood bare-headed on the steps. There the whole wide world lay before him in which to choose where he should hide. Once across the hills, those prison walls which had shut him in, he would be free to go where he chose

and they in turn would become as barriers to Margaret and she would not be able to over-pass them to follow him. Ah, one had to have a death sentence of three months passed on one, before one could ever hope to gain their steep summits and win freedom. He plunged down into the snow. The arctic winds whipped and buffeted him, and he could scarcely get his breath as he fought his way on head down. He reached the road and sped quickly along it in the gathering darkness, heading for the ridge that had always blocked his view from his window; now he would conquer it. He reached it and stood upon the crest overlooking the valley.

At last he was free! He had escaped from his bondage and stood upon the white ramparts of his prison-house. The world, from which they had dragged him so cruelly so many, many years ago, lay before him now, radiant and joyous, ready to welcome him back again.

The wind had lifted the edge of the sullen clouds, rolling them back low down in the farthest west, where showed a broad strip of palest green sky, and through this opening the setting sun flung a wide wave of wondrous color across the heavens above him, spreading and growing over the dull, leaden clouds and changing them swiftly into hanging curtains of incredible glory. There lay the warmth and light for which he had so longed and prayed, now no more denied to him. First, he would lie down and seek a little rest so that he would be strong to set out to reach that land of promise.



AMONG FRIENDS

DOLLY—Tell me this new scandal about her.

POLLY—But it isn't true.

"What difference does that make?"

THE LOVE PHILTER

By van Tassel Sutphen

THE opera was "Tristan and Isolde," and young Mrs. Crewe was hearing it for the first time since her marriage. But that had been nearly a year ago; it was almost unbelievable.

Marna leaned back in her chair with eyes half-closed, following upon the crowded hour of the love duo she had welcomed the *entr'acte* with a sense of positive physical relief. A strange feeling this, considering that every note of the music was so perfectly familiar to her; had she not been going to "Tristan" since the very day of her coming out? Indeed, she had hardly missed a performance during the three years; advisedly so, since of all the privileges accorded to the débutante this is incomparably the most precious. For when one is allowed "Tristan" it signifies that the depressing period of young-personhood is finally at an end; it spells emancipation and consideration from men—the grown-up kind.

The fatal torch had been flung down, and Marna, to her astonishment, found herself waiting *with Isolde* for the answer to the summons. At the first, she had tried to analyze philosophically this inexplicable mood; then she became aware that an unfamiliar chord was sounding somewhere—beyond, above, without the actual world of sound—and she contented herself with listening to it. It was only when the curtain came down that she realized that this new kingdom of heaven was within her.

Marna looked over at Peter, her husband. He sat at the back of the box talking with Nan Wallace, who

had been her maid-of-honor, and was still chiefest among her friends. Dear Peter, with his long, lean face and that half-humorous, half-melancholy droop at the corners of his mouth—how much of strength and simplicity and goodness lay back of those steadfast gray eyes!

"Being his wife, I ought to know," thought Marna. "Yet I didn't—up to a moment ago."

Was it because everything had come about so naturally, so inevitably? Peter and she had played together; they had hardly been separated for more than a day at a time in their lives until Peter went to college, and they had been married two years after his graduation. "We were predestined," said Marna to herself, "and I don't think that it occurred to either of us to consider any other arrangement possible. Peter was always the one and only man, and he must have had the same feeling about me and other women. Of course we were married.

"And happy—also of course. That is, we understand each other, the essential thing when it comes to edging round the rough corners of life. To give a little and to take a little—we had both of us learned that. It seemed an ideal philosophy of existence, and so it was—up to that particular moment in the second act when something happened and I fell in love with Peter."

Dr. Neal leaned over and spoke to Marna, and she answered him. Nonsense, no doubt, but just then the orchestra struck up and she was saved. She had not dared look at anybody again; it seemed as though she were

trying to hide a lighted lamp in her bosom, a futile proceeding and one inevitably provocative of remark. For do you not understand that it was only Peter who had the right to see?

Now the green curtain was down and Marna was saying good night to her grand friends. Mrs. Wallace had suggested the propriety of supper, but Marna correctly interpreted the slope of Peter's shoulders and refused; he had to be at the office early and the business candle cannot be burned at both ends.

They took a street-car home, for economical reasons, although Peter professed his ability to stand a hansom for once, and even sulked a little when he was not permitted to do so. But once arrived at the tiny apartment, miles uptown, Peter became cheerful again and announced that after all he was hungry. "Couldn't you manage just a taste of rabbit in the chafing-dish?" he asked persuasively. "It's only one o'clock."

Peter declared enthusiastically that it was a perfect rabbit; he rose majestically, brimming ale-glass in hand. "A *vous*," he said. Marna had been awaiting that first, full look; her heart beat violently as she forced herself to meet it.

Peter set down his empty glass. "This is the last of the case your Uncle George sent us," he remarked regretfully. "In future I'll have to worry along on just plain beer."

It was odd of Marna to decline even a taste of the marvelous rabbit that her own hands had made. "Not after 'Tristan,'" she explained.

Peter tried to argue the point. "You shouldn't let it work you up like that," he began dogmatically. "Of course the thing is cleverly done, even to the weak point of the magic business. But it won't stand analysis; it isn't real life."

"The love philter is only the symbol," urged Marna; "the visible sign of the inward miracle."

"You haven't been putting anything in my ale?" demanded Peter suspiciously, and scrutinized the bottom of

his glass. Marna's lip trembled, but Peter did not see; he was consulting his watch.

"Quarter of two," he announced, "and I am as sleepy as the door-mat at Alice's tea-party. Oh, the dormouse, was it? Well, I'm off just the same. I'll take my potion in the morning, if you please—the kind of coffee mother used to make. I'm afraid it won't turn me into a Tristan—no parterre circle sending up bouquets, no impresario holding out thousand-dollar bills in the wings. But it's something to work on, and that junior partnership is still a long way off. Good night, old girl. I'm sorry that I'm only just Peter, but you'll get those furs yet if I have to break into a bank." He stooped and kissed her; the door closed behind him.

Marna went to her writing-desk and, pulling out a certain shallow drawer, she touched the spring of the secret compartment that lay behind it; a naïve mystery at best, since even an inexperienced eye might have detected, at a glance, the false joiner work. Nevertheless there is something fascinating about the mere idea of a secret drawer, and Marna made as much mystery about it as was humanly possible; her chief regret was that she had nothing really worth while to hide away—somebody's will, for instance, or a document in cipher.

As it was, the compartment contained only a few trifles—a little cross formed of seed-pearls, an odd cuff-button, a twenty-dollar bill kept for great emergencies, and a small, square envelope with a gaudy, flower-bordered label. Upon the latter these words had been laboriously printed out in red ink:

"ALMIRAN—THE EGYPTIAN LOVE
FILTER—PALMISTRY AND
ASTROLOGY."

Marna puzzled a little over that word "filter"; somehow it didn't look right and she resolved to hunt it up in the dictionary. But she knew what it was intended to mean and she remembered distinctly that Saturday afternoon in October, two years ago, when

a coaching-party had driven over to the Marion County Fair and she had had her hand read by Almiran, the Romany Queen. The love philter had been thrown in for good measure, and at first she had smilingly declined to take it. But Almiran had been curiously insistent.

"Some day, lady, it may mean more than gold to your happiness." Marna had smiled again at that, but she had been sufficiently impressed to accept the mysterious packet. Moreover, she had kept it all this time; why, she could not have told herself. And now—

Marna drew the electric light a trifle nearer and carefully opened the envelope. It contained two enclosures of folded paper; Almiran had been more than generous in giving her a double portion of the inestimable treasure.

In each packet was a pinch of grayish white powder that smelt faintly of wintergreen. Marna put the stuff to her tongue and the taste had a certain far-away familiarity. She went into the kitchen and returned with a glass of water into which she emptied one of the powders, stirring it thoroughly until there was no trace of sediment. Marna sat and thought.

A blear-eyed Peter appeared in the doorway. "Muggins!" he said plaintively. "Muggins!" and pointed to the clock whose hands were on the stroke of three. Marna jumped up in confusion. "I hadn't an idea that it was so late," she explained. "Coming right away." She turned off the electric switch, and, under cover of darkness, gulped down the contents of the glass.

Nan Wallace and Dr. Neal dined with the Crewes that following night, and Peter was proud of the dinner—simple, indeed, but unexceptionable in all of its details. He urged upon Neal another helping of the *salmi* of duck.

"You know you never tasted anything like it, Bob," he went on vain-gloriously. "You can understand now why some men marry their cooks. I did, and I'm glad of it."

Miss Wallace sniffed. "Men are such candid brutes," she remarked.

"Peter used to be sentimental enough," put in Neal.

"I am yet," asseverated that gentleman stoutly. "I just love fried egg-plant, and Marna has a recipe for it from her great-grandmother. Then I adore *omelettes au rhum*."

"A man without passion is so uninteresting," said Nan thoughtfully.

"You've just got to keep the fires stoked," rejoined Peter.

Marna listened abstractedly to this badinage. "I've proved that there isn't anything poisonous in it," she said to herself. "And Peter doesn't care, really."

Nan was speaking of the performance of the night before. "Well, at least the third act, Peter," she said appealingly.

"Poorest fight I ever saw. It was obviously pulled."

"Oh, the fight!" this contemptuously. "How about the *Liebestod*?"

"A fellow gets so sleepy after four hours' work on the G string," pleaded Peter.

Marna fancied that Nan glanced at her a trifle pityingly, and her lips tightened; she had made up her mind.

"Coffee in the other room?" asked Peter.

"I'm going to make it myself in the pantry," said Marna, rising. "You and Bob stay here and smoke because Nan wants to write a note. You'll find everything in my desk, dear."

Miss Wallace withdrew to the sitting-room, and Marna carefully closed the door between the two apartments. "There's a draught from the pantry windows," she explained.

Now it chanced that Dr. Neal sat facing the old-fashioned mirror that hung over the buffet and so commanded a view of the pantry behind his back. Peter had moved into Nan's vacant seat and was consequently out of range of the curious performance which presently attracted Neal's attention. Marna had poured out the coffee; now she produced a little paper packet and emptied the white-gray

powder it contained into one of the cups, the one in the exact middle of the tray. Dr. Neal, though not an imaginative man, started and upset his liqueur-glass of green mint. An instant later Marna entered. There were only two cups on the tray; she set one before Neal and gave the other to Peter.

"I'll have Nan's ready in a moment," she said, and went back into the pantry. Neal sat and stared at that innocent-appearing demi-tasse that stood at Crewe's elbow—it was *the* cup.

"I'll make you another mint," said Peter hospitably.

"No," answered Neal hastily. "But if you don't mind," he added, "we'll trade coffee-cups; this one has sugar in it."

He reached over quickly and made the exchange. He swallowed a small portion of the doctored beverage, but could detect nothing unusual in the taste.

Peter took up his cup and drank its contents at a gulp. "Strong and black," he said approvingly. "Marna makes the best ever. But I thought you said it had sugar in it."

The door of the other room was shaken vigorously. "Something sticks," called Miss Wallace, and Peter went to her assistance.

"Why, it's locked!" he exclaimed, and turned the key.

An indignant Nan confronted him as the door flew open. "Am I condemned to solitary imprisonment?" she asked. "Where's my coffee, and what is Marna doing?"

When Dr. Neal came to think over this extraordinary affair he told himself that he had kept his head admirably, and particularly so at this juncture. Marna had just entered from the pantry and Neal noted how the color drained away from her face as she glanced from the empty coffee-cup at Peter's place to where her husband and Nan Wallace stood gazing at each other. Immediately afterward the tray in Marna's hand fell to the floor with a crash and the accident

was thereupon accorded the centre of the stage.

"That's the fourth one we've lost this week," remarked Peter ruefully, as he gathered up the fragments. "No more parties unless some kind friend gives us a new set of after-dinners."

"I am so sorry," faltered Marna. "I had to boil some more water and the spirit lamp burned badly."

"An explanation that does not explain," said Neal to himself.

"Well, I must have my coffee," insisted Miss Wallace. "I'll make some more for myself."

"We'll all help," said Peter gallantly. "Come on, Bob."

But Dr. Neal let the other three go back into the pantry without him; he had formed an idea and wanted this opportunity to put it into effect. In his overcoat pocket he had a collapsible traveling-cup; procuring it he quickly poured the contents of the suspected demi-tasse into the watertight cover and screwed the two halves together; now he had his evidence to be examined at leisure in his laboratory. At the entrance to the pantry he found something else—a torn bit of paper with some writing on it. This he managed to pick up unobserved and transfer to his pocket-book.

During the remainder of the evening they played at bridge—Bob and Marna against Peter and Nan. The cards did run somewhat against the former pair, but at bottom it was bad play that caused them to lose so heavily. Marna made several inexplicable mistakes, and Neal found his usually accurate judgment strangely at fault. Whereupon Nan and Peter exulted greatly; it was a new thing for them to be winning.

The evening came to an end at last, and Dr. Neal walked home in sober mood. Nor did the mystery clear up with the morning light and the progress of the chemical analysis. It was a relief to get a telephone message from Peter about eleven o'clock making an appointment for squash at the club that afternoon.

"He's all right, then," said Bob, as he hung up the receiver. "Unless it's something cumulative," he added, with gloomy after-reflection.

It was a week later, and Peter stopped in at the Wallaces' on his way uptown.

"It's about Marna," he confessed, as he sat down opposite Miss Wallace and absently stirred his cup of tea.

"What about Marna? Is the toast wrong again?"

"Toast!" groaned Peter. "Who cares about toast?"

Miss Wallace unbent a trifle. "Go on," she said.

"Ever since the night of our dinner," said Peter dismally. "As many moods as there are hours in the day; I don't understand her."

"Did you ever expect to?" inquired Miss Wallace with fine contempt. "That's the wonderful thing about Marna and the reason we all adore her."

"Of course, but nowadays I'm never allowed to get round the corner even. It's extremely disconcerting."

"There are violets."

"I bring her a bunch every blessed night."

"Diversion, possibly. Have you seen the new comedy at the Vanity Fair?"

"She won't hear of it."

A maid announced that Miss Wallace was wanted at the telephone. When she returned she looked grave.

"It was Marna," she said. "I told her you were here, but she has evidently been worrying. Better go home, Peter, and let me think it over. Try the comedy suggestion again."

After Mr. Crewe had gone Miss Wallace thought it over very seriously. "Something queer came into her voice when I told her that Peter was having his tea here. I wonder if anything can be wrong."

Dr. Neal happened in just then, as indeed he often did nowadays; he took his cup of tea with the contented air of one who has found the haven where he would be.

"I'm quite worried about the Crewes," remarked Miss Wallace suddenly. "Peter looks so pale and worn."

"Peter!" ejaculated Neal. "Then it *is* cumulative!" His jaw fell in horrified amaze.

"What is cumulative?"

"Nothing," answered Neal weakly.

"Robert Neal," said Miss Wallace sternly, "you have said both too much and too little. Now tell me."

When Neal had finished Miss Wallace considered at some length.

"You analyzed the coffee," she began. "What did you say you got?"

"Merely a precipitate of powdered chalk, a small quantity of bi-borate of soda or common borax, and a trace of flavoring extract—wintergreen."

"What's the effect?"

"Oh, quite inert. That's the peculiar thing about the business, unless—"

"Unless?"

"There may have been some toxic element that I didn't succeed in isolating. A small quantity in each dose, you understand, but cumulative in its action upon the system."

"Let me see that scrap of paper you picked up."

Neal handed her what appeared to be part of a torn-up envelope; it contained the single word "Filter," printed by hand in red ink.

"Some people are quite hipped about microbes and bacteria," he remarked. "May have been some germ destroyer. Borax is antiseptic, you know."

"Is it?" said Miss Wallace absently.

"There's just one other possible explanation. It might have been one of those secret cures for alcoholism that you read about in the religious family periodicals. Poor Peter, who doesn't average two cocktails in a month!"

"Rubbish!" rejoined Miss Wallace rudely. "It isn't Peter, anyway, who is out of sorts; it's Marna."

"Then I give it up," said Neal frankly.

"Well, I won't," returned Miss Wallace with commendable spirit. "Much

obliged, Bob, for what you told me, and just leave me that scrap of paper to puzzle over. You'll have to go now, for I'm dining out."

Two days later Peter came again to the Wallaces'.

"I'm just going out," explained Nan, somewhat constrainedly, as she entered the drawing-room. "I want to get my symphony tickets."

"I'll walk along," said Peter.

As they descended the steps Miss Wallace happened to notice a cab drawn up at the opposite curb. It followed them as they turned the corner into the Avenue; it continued to trail along as they walked uptown.

Nan felt her face burn under her heavy veil; suddenly she turned and walked back a few steps on pretense of examining the contents of a milliner's window; she was almost abreast of the cab when a gloved hand reached for the window-curtain and pulled it down.

"I think I'll step in here and have a look at Mélanie's new waists," said Miss Wallace abruptly. "You can't come, Peter; it wouldn't be proper."

"I wanted to talk with you about Marna," said Peter miserably.

"I saw her yesterday and she seemed perfectly well." Miss Wallace's tone was sub-acid.

"Physically, yes; it's something deeper."

Miss Wallace, with a supreme effort, choked back the words that rose to her lips; she was very angry and felt that she had the right to be. "It will come out all right," she said vaguely. "Perhaps a specialist."

The cab had stopped three doors up the street and a white face peered cautiously out of the back window. Nan raged inwardly at this shameful exhibition of feminine weakness, but she was resolved that Peter should not share it with her. "Get the comedy tickets," she urged somewhat absently.

There was nothing for Mr. Crewe to do but to raise his hat and walk away.

"Women are so essentially self-centred," he reflected bitterly. "But

I did think we could depend on Nan—Marna's best friend, too."

Peter, sitting at his office desk, looked stupidly at the note lying half-crushed in his hand; he straightened it out and for the tenth time read these astounding words:

I am going away and forever, Peter dear. It is the only thing to do, and I must, I must. I don't blame you—not the very least in the world—and it was all my fault, every bit of it. You will be happy and that is enough for me. M.

The cabman made the distance in extraordinarily quick time, but it was after five and already dark when Peter reached the apartment building. To his annoyance the elevator was not running, and he had to climb eight interminable flights of stairs. He rang the bell of suite No. 16, but there was no response; then he remembered that their one servant had Wednesdays out, and he fumbled in his pocket for his latch-key.

The hall was dark, but a single candle burned on the mantel in Marna's bedroom. Peter entered and looked around. The room was empty, but on the dressing-table lay a tray containing his wife's modest stock of jewelry and trinkets. They were all there—her watch and silver card-case, her one pretty brooch and three rings. There were the marquise that he had given her at Christmas, a handsome solitaire and—oh, Marna!—a plain but heavy circlet of gold. Peter bit his lips savagely and glanced over at the bed. There were her new furs and the opera-cloak that she had worn for the first time at "Tristan"—that had been ten days ago.

He went on through the apartment, opening every possible door with steadily sinking heart. Kitchen, pantry and dining-room were all deserted, but there was still the living-room. He entered.

The electric switch was under his hand, but he had no need to turn it on. Over on the street corner there was a big bunch of arc lights and the room was sufficiently illuminated to assure

him that it was empty. A cry burst from Peter's lips.

"Marna!" he called once and twice and thrice; then something shadowy and shaking arose from the depths of the easy-chair that had stood with its back toward him; a forlorn little figure glided into his arms.

Marna had confessed everything.

"So I put the philter in your cup," she continued, "and stood back into the pantry to wait until you had drunk it. But then everything went wrong. You *would* get up and let Nan out of the drawing-room, and I saw you standing there and looking at her with your empty coffee-cup on the table. Don't you know that with a love-philter it's always the first person that one sees, and it was Nan and not me! Oh, Peter!"

"But I never even tasted the coffee that you gave me," protested Peter. "Bob said that his had sugar in it, and so he changed with me."

"Oh!" said Marna.

"Such a cruel, wicked letter, dearest! And then to leave behind you everything that could possibly remind you of the old life—your furs, your jewelry, your wedding-ring, Marna."

"They didn't belong to me any more—not after losing your love. It seemed as though I must leave you just as I had come—with nothing, that is."

"But after all you didn't go," said Peter. "Why?" He seemed honestly puzzled.

"Oh, there were several reasons."

"Give me one."

"The elevator wasn't running."

"I know," said Peter, with an air of perfect comprehension. "But I had to walk up."

Marna kissed him in a passion of reproachful tenderness. "I couldn't make you understand better," she

whispered, "if I gave you a thousand and one reasons. I just didn't go."

"And that's quite enough," responded Peter, with simple finality.

Miss Wallace and Dr. Neal were strolling through the midway of the newly opened Circus Maximus.

"There!" exclaimed Nan, and clutched at her companion's arm so strenuously that he winced. "Don't you see that sign?" she went on. "Almiran and her Egyptian love Filter—with an F, you stupid man. Wait a moment."

Miss Wallace reappeared from the booth of the Romany queen with a small envelope in her hand; she tore it open and poured the grayish-white powder it contained into her ungloved palm.

"Smell it; taste it," she ordered, and Bob obeyed.

"It's the identical stuff," he agreed, "and so far as I can see, nothing more than a very ordinary grade of tooth-powder."

"It's a love philter," said Miss Wallace gravely. "Marna put it into the coffee that Peter was supposed to have drunk, and the rest is perfectly comprehensible."

"Nonsense," protested the man of science. "Just remember that I took a good big swallow of the mixture; it didn't have the slightest effect on me."

"Oh, on *you*," retorted Miss Wallace. But to her eternal confusion Bob turned and looked at her steadily; she made a gallant but ineffectual fight of it, and then her eyes dropped.

The interesting news of Nan Wallace's engagement to Bob Neal came to the Peter Crewes next morning while they were still at breakfast.

"What do you think now?" asked Marna, and beamed at Peter triumphantly. Peter said he didn't know, which was true enough.



ON MAKING BELIEVE

By Arthur Sullivant Hoffman

THERE is something of both bewilderment and amusement in the paradox that all of us live in but one world, and that nevertheless each one of us lives in a different world from all the others. The multiplicity of unity is a rather disconcerting concept. In this case, however, it is quite easily explained by man's habit of making believe and of believing or making believe that he believes what he makes believe. It often happens that way—a problem that at first glance seems abstruse or even complicated is quickly solved by the simplest kind of explanation, something we knew all along, but had overlooked because it was so ridiculously plain and suspiciously evident.

By using one little world amongst us, and each making believe it is something different from what all the rest make believe it is, we have attained a surprising and commendable variety without interfering with any of the other planets, beyond making believe we have pictures of them in the astronomies and enticing them momentarily into the other end of a telescope. It would doubtless be interesting if we could all see the real world or even all make believe about it the same way at the same time, but we can't. After the first few days of paralyzed amazement it would be an awful bore, anyway.

Fortunately, we cannot conceive of our round little earth as stripped of opinion and illusion, since all is, or is through imaginative spectacles, and each of us is unto himself a unique and varying standard of the actual. There may be a Mars of fact, a Venus of truth

and a Moon of nakedness, but who shall stand forth and say of our earth that *his* real is the actual? Everybody, forsooth, and nobody agreeing with anybody! Hence a Pandora's box of such hydra-headed and thousand-legged monsters as Point of View, Criticism, Argument and Positiveness.

So our world is a myriad of worlds radiating like the rays of a sun to each of us, the deck being constantly shuffled anew. "But," you cry, "you are mixing your figures of speech shamefully!" Ah, my friend, here you urge on those very beasts, Point of View with squinted eye, keen-nosed Criticism and Argument with brandished hands, to say nothing of Positiveness. And, after all, we were speaking only figuratively. But isn't it true that wherever there are two people there are two worlds, and wherever a thousand, a thousand? On Fifth avenue, in Oshkosh, at the world's other end, to one the world is sorrow, to another joy, to one amusing, to him at his elbow painful, to that dim eye the past, to this eager one the future, but to no two the same. Hence, as was said, those Beasts—and the world as it is.

So infinite is the infinitude of all this that on attempted consideration it becomes but food for the madhouse, that place where are confined those of certain beliefs and illusions by those of certain others. Fortunately chaos and disagreement are not complete, and there are times when a few of us may for a moment see a portion of the world in at least approximately the same way. We have always believed that Pandora resumed

her seat upon the lid in time to save to us one other sprite than Hope, detaining from that woeful emigration the gentle little lady Sympathy. And, preserving Sympathy, Pandora unwittingly gave to us also the kindly imp of Humor, though to this Eve of pagan mythology Humor was possibly not only unborn but unguessed. If humor be, in the last analysis, contrast and conflict, then the world has always reeked with it, but until Sympathy came there could be no appreciation, no sense of this crucible of all else.

And so we have with us Sympathy and Humor, and, having sympathy, we, some of us, are enabled from experience with our own mental processes to understand dimly that every other mortal is making believe that the world is as he happens to see it and he himself as he thinks he is. Having humor, we see how ridiculous it all is, letting go of our own make-believes long enough for an amused glance before we buckle down once more to seeing visions and living dreams on our own account. Perhaps we be ourselves but stuff of dreams; certain it is that our neighbors often go so far as being nightmares.

Let us make believe that we can see the world as certain others see it. For instance, the Cultured Person. (Not, of course, the cultured person.) To him of the capital letters the world is but an illiterate essay to which he condescends to serve as punctuation, or a muddled book to which a merciful God has vouchsafed him as an appendix—unhappily an appendix to defy all our fashionable surgical ideas on the subject. He makes believe that between him and the herd lies an unbridgable gulf, whereas it is but the breadth of an A and as easy of crossing as a T. He makes believe that the alphabet has twenty-six letters, but to him they are all P's and Q's. Give the Cultured Person a monocle or a lorgnette, a phonographic vocabulary of technical terms, the psychological suppression of everything suppressible and half a chance, and he will make you

believe he is. After a course in mud-pies and "Love-Affairs of Great Sculptors" and an objection to the sex of Borglum's angels on the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, he comes to believe that Michelangelo's greatest mistake lay in dying before the Cultured Person could point out his lesser ones. Give him an opportunity to exclude Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman from the Hall of Fame, and, believing that he has mastered literature and ascended to live in the clouds of Olympus, he has his breakfast sent up on the dumb-waiter to carry out the illusion. Let him hear four Germans and three Italians in grand opera, and he makes believe that he has to writhe in his seat over a discord and will crescendo upstairs at night and diminuendo downtown to business in the morning, though he may consider an arpeggio a kind of brad-awl, and *poco rall* a species of breakfast-food. He can draw a meager salary and make believe he is an artist, or take part in amateur theatricals, read Shaw and believe he has become so great a dramatic critic that Shakespeare is turning round and round in his grave like a pin-wheel. He writes a book on the architecture of the French châteaux and isn't able to distinguish between a Gothic arch and a Roman punch. You have heard the Cultured Person breathe rapturously over the mere names of Ibsen, Browning and Maeterlinck, and known that he believed "Pippa Passes" to be some rocky mountain defiles in Italy, Moan-ah to be Vanna's first name, and "Peer Gynt" to be a Norwegian expression for Peeping Tom.

Parenthetically, as to the reading of fiction and poetry—what is that but unabashed make-believing for all of us? We read, and believe we live what we read—or that we feel or even understand it. And as for the author and the editor and the publisher—oh, well! The theatre—there it is again, more make-believing, all making-believe, with the press-agent perhaps carrying off the honors—the make-believing audience and the

make-believe audience, the make-believing drama and the make-believe drama, the make-believing actor and the make-believe actor. Music, too, and also vaudeville songs and grand opera, where certain sound-waves enter the two holes on either side of your head and make you make-believe that your attention has been distracted from Mrs. So-and-So's costume in the box half-way down the side of the grand tier, just beyond that vulgar woman with the huge aigrette. But to return to our muttons.

Take the miser. Of course, one seldom sees a satisfactory miser nowadays. They are too well dressed, or live in too sumptuous a house or are too poor. There has been a sad falling off, these days when ideals count for so little, in the conscientiousness that leads to a perfect attainment, and your miser is no longer what he should be. Where will you find him—him of the shabby, shiny coat, creeping bent-backed along the road with eyes searching the dust for the once-in-a-lifetime gold-piece, starving his body as thin as his soul for pennies and pulling down the shades at night to gloat over the clinking coins that run between his taloned fingers? There would be your proper miser! But alas! Romance is fled. Now and then you find a fair approximation, after he is dead, and by means of a make-believing newspaper correspondent; but the live ones are generally like the rest of us in too many respects to be satisfactory objects of contumely. No, dear reader, all this is not telling what the world looks like to these curmudgeons of warped and twisted view. That is what we started out to do, but we were only making believe.

Again, there is the chronic borrower, the gentleman who last month invited you to a fashionable restaurant for dinner and at the last moment made believe he had inadvertently left his purse at home, and with much apology was forced to ask you to foot the generous bill, both of you making believe that the paying guest believed the non-paying host's make believe.

Ah, this chronic borrower, what a world he makes of it! Outwardly he makes believe that he will pay; inwardly he makes believe that he will not. In the first case, he will not; in the second, he will. For he lives by making others make believe that he will pay his debts, and his object is to make believe with himself that he will not have to, yet in all the world there is nothing so inexorable as this, that we do pay for every bit of life that comes to us, for pleasure with suffering, for suffering with pleasure. You say that pleasure sometimes brings pleasure? Ah, but for pleasure of so high an ethical quality we pay at the very time of having in the denial of other pleasures less ethically exalted. Those ancient practitioners of self-inflicted martyrdom who stood all day on one leg at the top of a pillar, lived with swine, lashed themselves with whips or even went so far as to wear a scratchy undershirt next their believing skins—all this they did from some dim realization that all things are in a balance of eternity which we must hold level, and that pain now means pleasure later, as pleasure now means pain to come, the unknown quantity of the Kingdom of Heaven serving to fill out the equation. The whole system of penance, true to this law in its relation to the past, is equally true in its relation to the future—or at least we make believe so.

The ennuied man of the world, the blasé man-about-town—look you at him. His principal illusion is that the world, not he, is a sucked orange; his chief illusion is that he has lived, when in reality he has but spent his time in dying rapidly; and his main illusion is that he has none. Because in trotting the globe or the sidewalk he has seen a millionth part of the world, why should he make believe that both the seen and the unseen can only bore him? Having grown too old and dried for wholesome activity, must he scoff at the silly pastimes of vigorous youth? Does his no longer finger-marking all the stage doors on Broadway establish the fact that the drama has declined? Because he has dined on degenerate dainties at

fashionable restaurants ever since the artificial palms were little bits of things, is he warranted in marveling that eating is still prevalent? He imagines he has lived, forsooth, this human casket of the world's excesses! Look you, gentles, your true man of the world is *of the world*; him we speak of is but of himself, for himself, by himself. He makes believe that the whole world is within him, and he is not even in the world, seeing it through a microscopic telescope and believing he uses the naked eye. Nay, my friend, you have not lived! You are but as canned beef to a fresh porterhouse, and the can is of your own making. Fast living is not life, and as one swallow does not make a Summer, so a thousand cannot make a lifetime.

And, here, one who lives in glorious pride of birth because his grandfather was a better man than he: there, one who hoots at ancestry because he is a better man than his grandfather. Verily, a wondrous pair, holding each to his make-believe that his personal opinion is a general truth, and both clinging immutably to their irreconcilable holdings! The one boasts of his blood, and has not enough of it to blush with; the other boasts of his brains, and has not enough to understand that drinking out of a finger-bowl covers up a multitude of virtues. The one brags of his descent, and does not know how far he has descended; the other brags of his rise, and is not a rose but a cabbage. The first owes his prominence to the bar sinister; the second to the bend dexterous. The one is born and could shift the blame; the other is made and the rest of us have to take the consequences. The blue-blood is a finished product, and we wonder at the pains expended on him; the red-blood is self-made, and we marvel at his inability as an architect. The one follows his lineage back to William the Conqueror, forgetting that the old blackguard ate with his fingers and never took a bath in his life; the other drags his ancestry after him as a kind of "before taking" advertisement of himself, failing to remember that if his

forebears had not followed the plow he would not have had the constitution that enabled him to trample his weaker brethren under foot. And if you were to trace their genealogical records far enough into the past you would find the ancestors of both of them swinging by hairy tails from the branches of the same tree, and you couldn't pick out the particular progenitors of either of them even if you put tags on the whole simian colony.

Cast a discerning eye upon that prince of make-believers, the New Yorker. There are two kinds of him. The first New Yorker makes believe he is a New Yorker, and was born and raised in Ohio, California, Italy or Bulgaria; the second New Yorker makes believe he is an American—except in certain weird cases, and fixes upon the Jersey bank of the Hudson as the westernmost boundary of the United States. The naturalized New Yorker imagines the rest of the world came with him to New York; the native-born imagines that New York *is* the world, with boulevards extending through Europe and country pikes stretching out to Philadelphia and Chicago. Both of them alike believe that God made the world Himself, but got help when it came to New York.

Consider all the others, each with his little make-believe world, and no one of them all visioning the worlds of the rest. The egoist, the inventor, the hobby-rider, the lover, the dame of fashion, the dreamer, the cold man of affairs—how each one gives a shake to the kaleidoscope of this our world and beholds at the other end of his narrow funnel the common particles shaped into his own particular evanescent design. And if by chance he sees that of his neighbor for one fleeting moment and part of it is somewhat like his own, behold the little lady Sympathy; but if the two designs lack all resemblance then dances in the imp of Humor, or, failing him, the ogre Wrath. And Logic in his scholarly black gown? Of course. For what else is logic than the measure of how much the make-believe worlds of other folks fail to tally with

our own? (Logic, we mean, as she is spoke.) And along with these, all the other devils and angels.

If only one could always peep through the kaleidoscope and find one's own design the same! How it changes! Do you remember what fairy pictures glowed there once, there at the other end of your own narrow funnel? What a world it used to be! Do you remember how once at the mere whim of your childish fancy all the bits of magic glass shaped themselves as you would have them? Then your make-believes were very real, very real indeed. Now? Have you the heart to look back and see how the colors faded slowly, slowly with the years, how the bits of glass took with less and less alacrity the forms you wished, how the hand became more prone to tremble just as the design was nearly complete? You cannot see those old pictures now, and somehow the new ones are not always so satisfactory. Certainly they grow fewer and fewer in number, and if you seize on one and hold it often before your eyes it may grow brighter and brighter before you, but the others come no more. There was no law of compensation in the old days. That was a time when you could eat your cake and have it too. Nowadays if you eat you have indigestion, and if you have it—well, most of us know what indigestion means. Or believe we do or believe we don't, which amounts to the same thing.

What a strange panorama unfolds behind us when we look back over our lives—strange, painful and pleasurable, and sad withal. To stare back into the past and see how the dreams were fulfilled or unfulfilled by the realities, how our make-believes and those of our neighbors deceived both them and us, or failed to deceive. Have they not played a surprising part in the touch-and-go courses of our lives, these make-believes, these empty, gaudy dreams or deadly serious hallucinations? Verily, the strands from the spindle of Clotho are two parts dream-thread, and the shears of Atropos but click our awakening from lifelong make-be-

lieves. Hail, Parcae, make-believe goddesses of make-believing men!

For can you not see, there where dream-licensed youth came to its make-believe end and the make-believe realities of maturity made believe at beginning, how it was but your own make-believe adequacy that alone scrambled you up the particular height upon which you had set your dreaming eye, or dumped you ignominiously down the abyss you had made believe was a mountain-top? Or can you not see how it was but your own make-believe standard of happiness that made a fair reality seem a hideous nightmare, or—do not look!—caused you to go blithely along a way sharp with the thorns of pain and rough with the pebbles of adversity?

How clear it is now that it was but a make-believe platonism that married you, or a make-believe love that divorced you. Would you have, stored away in the attic, those gilt and gaudy certificates of mining stock if you had not made believe the brick was golden? Turn back in your life to a hundred thousand forkings of the road and realize that it was but a will-o'-the-wisp, a rainbow promise, an imagined boggy, an ideal unlimited, a hope divine, what kind of make-believe you will, that chose for you one turning of the road and left the other to be undying food for make-believe.

Aye, and the present! Look within, with the glamour from your eyes, and behold how there and now we make-believe. See, the fault we thought a trifle, or even not our own, is a monster preying upon the happiness of others; and the spark of good our modesty passed by is a great light upon the paths of men. That prideful exterior of worth to which the world's eyes were invited is to the world but the whiting of a sepulcher; and the shame that made us hang our heads is to our fellows a crown of thorns worn with estimable fortitude. Our witty conversation sounds in our ears like the dirge of Death himself, and our wise sayings like the stammerings of fools. We had held ourselves to be so pure,

and—well, perhaps there is a 'scutcheon underneath the blot. We looked upon ourselves as brave, handsome, famous, courted, loved, admired—but, in God's name, let us look no more! If we would enjoy our make-believes we had best forsake the past and steal forward into the future where dreams are light of foot and smiling-faced.

And yet, and yet—ah, it is a good old world after all, and not the least of its glories is this same heart-custom of the make-believe. Hope and sympathy and humor were saved to us for this—to make believe with and to glimpse the make-believes of others, and without our make-believing it would be a dull, cold world indeed. For, lacking hope, there is no faith, and what is sympathy but charity and love? And humor? Ah! thou little kindly imp, who findest mirth in tragedy and laughs the world away, thou art something more than imp—'tis but thy urchin fancy to disguise thee thus! There are some few that know thee as thou art, and their lives be more than happier for the knowing. Thou art an Ariel, vague but masterful, and thy Prospero is called Proportion.

Proportion—what is that? Verily, the one touch of divine the gods have given men. Given in part only, for had they given all we had been gods, and if none, we had been beasts. For

to have Proportion as the gods themselves have it is to know all things and understand—the Cause, the Purpose, and the How and Why—and, knowing, there is neither sin nor pain nor death. 'Tis by our dim and faulty vision of the True Proportions that we sense the Great Design and grope our way toward it with our faltering, pitiful laws of Right and Wrong, of Good and Ill. So comes it that we make believe, and know, and know not, that we do it. For when we build the ideals of our make-believes we have but glimpsed, truly or falsely, the Great Design, and are inspired—or mad; and when we tear them down with sapient mockery, smearing, with hands begrimed, the childish pictures from the slate of life, we have but awakened to our imperfect sensing of that Great Design. In this one thing alone lies hope, that, sensing, we make-believe.

And in all that we have said we have been making believe—making believe that there is wisdom in it, that there is none whatever; that we believe it, that we are making believe. And you, too, dear reader, have been making-believe—that you knew it all beforehand, or that we knew something you did not; that it has some thin grain of sense in it, or that it has not. And always and ever that you are not making-believe.



CONTENTMENT

By Emma A. Lente

SHE saw the busy world go by;
 "And I will go along!" she said,
 "For life is only worth the while
 Where thousands tread!"

She saw the merry world go by;
 "Pass on; I do not care!" she said.
 "I have a cot where sunshine lies
 Upon a baby's head!"

STRATAGEMS AND SPOILS

By Edward Clark Marsh

IT was the old duel between Twenty and Forty—with Twenty, the challenger, leaving to Forty the choice of weapons.

Mrs. Robec chose, she fondly imagined, the blunted rapier that would disarm without inflicting mortal hurt.

"Mama," said her daughter, breaking a silence that had begun to fill with uncomfortable suggestions for both of them, "is Mr. Nordlinger a good man?"

"My dear child," ejaculated Mrs. Robec, "what an odd question to ask about a man in this day!"

"But why, mama?" pursued Isabelle, still serious in the face of her mother's flippancy. After her years of school in France and England she had returned to find this clever, sophisticated woman something of a stranger. "Aren't men good any more?"

"Better than ever—and worse," was the placid rejoinder. "I was joking, child; but probably I meant something by it, too—what could it have been? Perhaps that old-fashioned word 'good' doesn't quite mean the same to us that it did to your grandmother. We don't parcel them off into sheep and goats any more; we allow for more shades—gradations. 'Good' and 'bad' are too sweeping; they apply to every man. Yes, that must have been what I meant. You must use your adjectives more discriminatingly, child."

Isabelle looked up from her embroidery. She was obviously perplexed, and as obviously in earnest in pressing her inquiry. "Well, then," she persisted, "do you consider him an honorable man?"

"There you go again!" Her mother's handsome, aquiline face showed mingled terror and amusement. "Herbert Nordlinger isn't a politician; he's a gentleman. Let's take his honor for granted."

"I don't think you quite understand, mama," replied Isabelle, summoning her quiet dignity to cover a faint blush. "I really want to know your opinion of Mr. Nordlinger as a man."

Mrs. Robec continued her occupation of moving a group of cards like checkers around a diagram of a dinner-table long enough to change Mr. Herbert Nordlinger from a position beside her daughter to one at the left of the hostess. Then she paused and looked thoughtfully at the tall, pale, fair-haired girl who sat at the window. When she spoke there was a recognition of responsibility and even some anxiety underneath the light tone which she would not lay aside.

"My opinion of Mr. Nordlinger?" she began, with a shade of hesitation. "That he is a man of infinite taste, above all. He's a dilettante of life; he knows too much ever to do anything. You see, he's the modern man, Isabelle; he has learned the futility of making an effort. If he had been born very poor or very rich he might have done anything. As it is, he has just enough money to leave him all his time for reflecting on his own uselessness. Of course he's spoiled—and quite charming. Is that what you wanted, dear?"

The gray eyes sought Mrs. Robec's again, and the anxious tone in the girl's voice persisted. "But don't you think, mama, that he is a man of high ideals?"

"Isabelle!" exclaimed her mother. "What *are* you driving at? Why this interest in Mr. Nordlinger's ideals?"

The girl looked straight at her embroidery now, and the flush on her face deepened. "Because—he asked me last night to be his wife."

"Oh!" Mrs. Robec's voice expressed a variety of emotions. "So soon? I knew it was coming, of course, sooner or later."

"I didn't," said the girl simply.

"And you accepted him, equally of course? A girl always accepts her first proposal, just as surely as she does her last."

"Oh, no, mama." The gentleness of Isabelle's voice struck her mother for the first time as almost excessive. "I asked him if he had spoken to you, and he said no—that would be, he said, in America, to concede that I was not the one to decide. He said he would be very happy to consult you when I sent him. I told him," she went on bravely in the face of her mother's scrutiny, "that I appreciated the high honor he had done me, and that in a matter of such importance he must give me time to consider."

She had gone straight through her quaint, formal little recital, terribly conscious of the intent gaze now fixed on her, more than a little fearful of the light rejoinder she awaited from this clever, worldly-wise woman. But her tense attitude of waiting relaxed just perceptibly at the gentle note in the low laugh with which her mother rejoined:

"Ah, then it's all right, Isabelle. When one can stop to consider, in such matters, no further consideration is needed."

The daughter smiled a faint recognition of the sympathy in her mother's voice, but her mind was still intent on the problem. "I'm afraid that's not quite true," she went on. "I'm afraid—I think that I really care for him."

At the unexpected announcement the look of amused tolerance vanished from Mrs. Robec's face. She crossed over to Isabelle's side and laid her hand

with unwonted tenderness on the fair, smooth hair.

"Forgive me, my dear," she said gently. "I didn't realize at first how serious you were. Perhaps I ought to have foreseen all this, and been more ready to help you. I do care very much for your happiness, daughter mine, though I fear you have often thought me an indifferent, sarcastic mother."

"Oh, no, never, mama," interrupted Isabelle dutifully.

"Well, we won't dwell on that now, will we?" Mrs. Robec tried to speak fluently, though she felt herself feeling her way—oh, how cautiously! "We must think of Mr. Nordlinger—don't be frightened," she added, in response to a sudden tightening of her daughter's grip on her hand. "I'm not going to play the grim and tyrannous parent. I should never oppose your marriage to any worthy man whom you honestly, genuinely love. All I ask is that you shall be sure you love him so much, so genuinely that you can be happy. Mr. Nordlinger—I'm going to be quite frank with you—isn't the man I would have chosen for you; but I am not the one to choose. Be sure, Isabelle, not only that I will never ask you to marry a man you don't love, but that I'll never, in the long run, oppose your marrying the man you do."

It was perhaps the longest and most serious speech the daughter had heard, since her return, from this mother, to whose brilliancy and beauty and eternally youthful vivacity she rendered her secret homage. She did not guess how far and swiftly her companion's thoughts had traveled under cover of her plitudinizing. Mrs. Robec indeed felt the moment a crucial test of the tact on which she prided herself. No reflection, no analysis of qualities was required to teach her that Herbert Nordlinger, amateur of emotions, restless seeker after the subtler sensations of life, was the last man in the world to whom her daughter's marital happiness could safely be entrusted. But his impossibility as a husband was not more certain than the necessity for

leaving at least the appearance of decision to the girl's own volition. Simple, serious, devoid of humor and subtleties as she was, Isabelle must be brought to see the unfitness of her lover.

Just now such enlightenment seemed difficult enough to achieve. "If you only knew how lovely and wonderfully clever he is!" was her answer to her mother's tentative opposition.

"Perhaps I do," Mrs. Robec rejoined. Even to herself the tone sounded so significant that she hastened to deflect its point. "If not, I must learn to know. But I must have time for that, and you, Isabelle, must have time to know your own mind. Why, you're scarcely more than a schoolgirl, you infant of a *débutante*! Will you trust me, then, to give your answer to Mr. Nordlinger?"

"If you wish it, mama," Isabelle sighed gently. "I know you will do what is wisest—and you won't require me to be unhappy, will you?"

Mrs. Robec met her promptly. Her plot was already formulated. "Ah, never that!" she cried, ringing her words out confidently. "I want only to give you the benefit of what poor wisdom and experience I may have. And so I ask of you a great sacrifice, that will some day seem very small. Let me carry to Mr. Nordlinger your own request that not another word of this shall pass between you for six months. Then he shall ask you once more, and you shall give your answer, whatever it may be, with my full approval. Is it too much for an anxious mother to ask, Isabelle?"

Isabelle had long since laid aside her sewing. She rose now and kissed her mother gravely on the cheek. "Whatever you ask must be right," she said seriously. "I shall do as you say, mama—and I leave you to tell Mr. Nordlinger."

II

IF the dinner that Mrs. Robec gave a few evenings later was not recognized as one of her supreme achievements, it at least served its purpose.

The checker-game with the names of her guests led to wonderful results. When Herbert Nordlinger found himself taking in Mrs. Harton he wondered at the lapse of the tact for which his hostess was justly celebrated. But his first comprehensive glance around the table aroused a new wonder, which gave way by degrees to a dawning suspicion and then certainty that expressed itself in a broad smile of delighted recognition. How clever the woman was, to be sure!

Mrs. Robec had indeed managed her contacts consummately. On their arrival at the table a mysterious re-pairing of her guests seemed to take place, as each one found himself—by the merest chance, of course—touching elbows with the closest affinity the company could produce. With the appearance of the fish Mrs. Robec found herself, as she had intended, at liberty to turn to Nordlinger, whose smile as he met her glance signaled comprehension of the success of her arrangement.

"I have just registered a vow," he began, still smiling broadly.

"A sign of a wavering purpose," she returned. "It's hardly worth while asking what it was."

"But it's worth my while to tell you," was his rejoinder. "I've sworn never again to doubt for a moment your tact."

"Why tact?" she shot at him. "You mean my determination to secure my own ends."

"Ah! And the end in this case is——?"

"Above all, your own delightful society, dear Mr. Nordlinger." There was not a trace of mockery in her light tone.

Nevertheless Mr. Nordlinger modestly demurred. "No, that isn't, this time—be honest, now!—the real end, is it? It's only at best a means?"

"Both," Mrs. Robec gravely assured him. "If I adore you, dear man, it's for the very reason that you have the intuition to read my ulterior motive. I want, of course, to talk to you about Isabelle—and yourself."

Mr. Nordlinger's right hand toyed reflectively with a huge scarab on his left index finger. His hands were long and thin. He was tall and somewhat stooped, a little bald, a little gray, a little hollow of eye and gaunt of feature. A wide, thin-lipped, almost tremulously sensitive mouth keyed the expression of the angular face to gentleness. His low voice escaped monotony by its subtle modulations.

"Yes, she was to speak to you at once," he acquiesced. "You didn't suspect it was coming, did you?"

"I suspected," Mrs. Robec rather grimly declared, "no more than you did a month ago."

"How perfectly you understand me," he murmured.

"Otherwise," she pursued, disregarding his interpolation, "I fear my daughter's health would have demanded the cutting short of her débütante season."

Mr. Nordlinger brought his mildest manner to bear on the situation. "Am I to infer, then, that there is question of the luster I might be able to shed on the rôle of Mrs. Robec's son-in-law?"

"On the contrary," she met him promptly, "I'm sure you would be admirable in that relation, if only it could be divested of all reference to Isabelle."

His reply was directed at her challenging conditional clause. "That *would* be difficult, wouldn't it? It seems almost impossible to eliminate her from the situation."

Perhaps it was as well that Mrs. Robec missed the latter part of his remark. Her attention was demanded for the moment by Colonel Chester, and after answering his question she deftly trimmed the sputtering wicks of conversation here and there around the table.

When she could once more turn to Mr. Nordlinger he met her with the air of one holding out in patient hands the interrupted thread of talk, which she took up unbroken.

"She is, for both of us equally, the one to be considered above all. You

must learn sooner or later that I have great ambitions for my daughter."

"But surely—" Herbert Nordlinger was firm now—"you are too great for that!"

Mrs. Robec raised her hand. "Wait. My ambition is to see her always happy."

"Ah, then we are at one after all," he rejoined, with a smile.

"I fear not," she said gently. "You have no doubt of your ability to make her happy. I have, because I know how surely she would fail to make you happy. No, Mr. Nordlinger, my sweet, serious, simple Isabelle—you would exhaust her in a year. You are the most modern of men—we are all tainted, more or less. Your life has been a chase after new and subtle sensations; your tastes are fantastic, morbid, exotic. She is too good for us—too healthy, and I mean her to remain so. She will always be a child; she'll always play the 'Songs Without Words' and adore George Eliot. She can't understand Richard Strauss, and she'll always believe, as the dear nuns taught her, that Bourget and Anatole France are immoral. I know all this has its fascination for you now; it's a novelty—and novelty is the breath of your life. But when the sharp edge of the contrast has worn off—what then? No, it would never do."

Mr. Nordlinger heard her out in silence. His effort to key his expression to the tone of gaiety about him would have struck the casual observer as successful. Only Mrs. Robec could have noted the tightening of the lines about his mouth.

At last he spoke. "Then you not only pronounce me guilty, but you take from me the last hope of reformation?"

"No, not that." Mrs. Robec was sure of her ground. "I try only to open your eyes to the horror of the life-sentence you would give yourself. Look at her now." She indicated with a nod her daughter, listening with gentle intentness to middle-aged Mr. Nebbet's explanation of the difference between the first and second "Hamlet" quartos. "Isabelle has absolutely no

sense of humor. She doesn't need it—so long as she doesn't marry you. She might very well learn to adore you—and think how it would bore you to be merely adored. She's fine and good almost beyond our comprehension, but the subtler graces, of mind and body—she doesn't know them. Your acquaintance with life wouldn't really impress her half so much as Mr. Nebbet's erudition. You would mystify her and she would weary you, and in a year you would both be coming to me to untangle the wretched snarl."

"Then I'm to take this that you say as her answer—as coming from her?" queried Mr. Nordlinger with studied impassivity.

"Oh, *jamais de la vie!* I speak not as one having authority—merely as a modern parent," laughed Mrs. Robec as she scanned the faces around the table. Their talk had not been accomplished without interruptions, and now the end of the excellent dinner had been reached. The hostess went on hurriedly before she gave the signal for the withdrawal of the ladies. "Please don't talk to her alone tonight; watch her. And come to me before you leave. I'm not through."

Her smile as she turned away was meant for encouragement, but Nordlinger's eyes were already upon her daughter. Isabelle's glance had sought him out, but her serious expression gave him no signal of her mood. It came to him suddenly, in the light of her mother's rather cruel disparagement, that the means of expression at the command of this girl—the girl he loved—were actually somewhat limited. She had not her mother's smile—the rare, swift smile that could flash a hundred subtle changes of mood in a minute. But then, he reflected, that very fact was her quality; the perfection of her charm was that it never changed.

The thought came to him again, like a recurring decimal, on his return to the drawing-room. Isabelle sat beside Mrs. Harton, giving to that lady's spirited reminiscences the same grave attention she had accorded Mr. Neb-

bet's discourse. Nordlinger joined them, directing his words to Mrs. Harton and his veiled glances to the girl who sat quietly listening. The handsome widow was in extravagantly high spirits; Nordlinger was subtly, whimsically fantastic. Isabelle's serious smile was constant through it all.

At the first opportunity he was again at Mrs. Robec's side. In spite of his assumption of self-possession, he was restless under the suspended parental verdict. It was a mood in which he sought not only certainty as to the outcome of his suit—which, he was quick to recognize, rested with the mother—but almost equally the grateful contact with a spirit so quick to meet his own. Indubitably, Mrs. Robec understood him.

She was prepared for the question implied in his approach. "May I give it to you straight?" she began, taking up their talk exactly where she had left off.

"Since you disclaim authority," he answered slowly, "I shall accept your judgment and your advice—if you're so good as to give it—at their immense intrinsic value."

"Ah, my advice," she demurred, "is to accept only so much as your own judgment approves. Yet I shall ask you—as a voluntary favor, Mr. Nordlinger, to yourself, to Isabelle and to me—to follow *my* line. Isabelle did, it is true, on my promise not to betray her, entrust to me her answer. It is because I know your self-control, your patience, and appreciate them, that I ask you to delay. I sha'n't ask you not to see Isabelle, not to be with her; I sha'n't remove her from your influence. It's too late for that—I'm quite frank, you see. The best that can happen now is that you learn to know and understand each other thoroughly. But promise me—and I engage that Isabelle shall on her side meet the condition—that there shall be no word of love between you for a term. Do I seem ungenerous?"

Mr. Nordlinger appeared to ponder deeply. "Then my sentence, instead

of being for life, is merely indeterminate?"

"I'll make it definite, if you wish," she replied with an air of generous concession, "and short as anyone could in reason ask. Let's agree that we'll all try to maintain this dangerous, unstable equilibrium for six months—a short sentence, you see, because of your youth and previous blameless life. May I count on you?"

"And when I'm released—?" The slight upward inflection conveyed a question, not a threat, and Mrs. Robec breathed her relief.

"Ah, I refuse to consider you in the light of a jailbird," she said brightly. "Let's drop the metaphor. At the end of the period I pledge myself to interpose no further obstacles—more than that, to sanction with all my heart whatever answer my daughter may, of her own free will, make you. I'll be satisfied then. Will you?"

For answer he held out his hand to her. "Goodnight. You are generous to ask my agreement when you might flaunt your absolute power. I agree to everything. Goodnight."

III

"I *did* count right," said Herbert Nordlinger as he entered, at the opera, the box that was Mrs. Robec's on certain occasions to be determined by abstruse calculation. "It's on odd nights and even matinées that you're here, isn't it? I came tonight expressly to see you—and hear Fremstad for a moment."

Mrs. Robec was effulgent with cordiality as she waved him to a seat beside her. "I'll enter into no rivalry with glorious Fremstad," she declared; "though Isabelle may—for it's really to see her, I hope, that you came."

Nordlinger glanced swiftly at the girl, who had returned, after her formal, old-world greeting of him, to the surreptitious study of a libretto. Only her heightened color betrayed her consciousness of his presence. In spite of himself he sighed.

"Yes, I want to see her, of course,"

he acquiesced. "But let me sit here a moment and talk with you. Yours is the rare gift, dear Mrs. Robec, of being soothing without being soporific. Isabelle, you know, has standards; she does hold one up. She's a lovely character," he ended lamely, with another sigh.

"Which I count on you to help develop," assented his interlocutress. "There is, after all, you know, an immense amount that you can do for her, if only you don't expose her to corruption by trying to do too much."

"But there's the constant danger," Nordlinger returned despondently. "I'm hopelessly tainted—you yourself have said it, who should know. Hadn't I better stick to my own kind?"

"I trust you—your discretion as well as your intention. Go and talk to her about the music. She has intelligence—she wants to learn, though I fear she'll never quite comprehend. 'Siegfried' seems to be too much for her." She turned to a stout, florid man who at this moment entered the box. "Mr. Boyd, come and save me from the otherwise sad consequences of Mr. Nordlinger's desertion. He leaves me—the old tragedy!—to talk with my daughter."

As Nordlinger moved over to the girl's side the recollection of the last talk he had had with Mrs. Robec mingled complexly with the mood of the present. Her remarkable penetration struck him afresh. In spite of the enormous difference in their points of view, she seemed to read the young girl perfectly. He was uneasy at finding himself actually reluctant to quit the society of the mother for that of the girl he loved. Isabelle's transparent honesty, the exquisite purity and gentleness of soul that had so irresistibly won him, seemed to him tonight to set her apart, to remove her far from the comfortable world of indifferent compromise in which he had learned to live.

In his irritation at his own shortcoming he found a perverse delight in forcing her to meet him on ground where his intellectual superiority would

show unquestioned. He directed the talk to music and singers, and listened almost condescendingly while she betrayed her old-fashioned, Philistine tastes and standards. She spoke earnestly, obviously seeking his approval, and yet too honest to make the small pretenses that he half hoped for. In the end, after he had taken his leave as the curtain went up, this was what remained with him—her cold disdain of the petty make-believe that, with so many of the women he knew, was made to pass for culture. The open, austere purity of her nature still allured him; he compared it to the eternal charm flowing out of some chastely undraped form on a Greek vase. The only doubt Mrs. Robec had been able to implant in his mind was of the permanence of the charm. Of its rarity he had, in his ignorance of the youthful feminine, no doubt.

For Herbert Nordlinger had but just arrived at that critical period when a man turns from the admiration of knowledge in woman to the worship of innocence. Since the culminating passion of his youth—for the last dozen, that is to say, of his thirty-five years—he had been unable to persuade himself that he might love. By a process of unconscious selection he had cultivated the society of women of mature experience, who, appreciating the fine qualities of his mind, knew how to feed his gentler emotions and flatter his vanity by "understanding" him. Thus it had happened that he had never known with any degree of intimacy a woman under thirty. He had practised his dilettantism in love as in the arts, until it had become his habit. He had often imagined himself falling in love, in his casual, comfortable way, with a woman like Mrs. Robec, while barely recognizing the existence of a younger generation. But the beginning of his acquaintance with Isabelle, which accident had from the first given a somewhat intimate turn, had coincided with the moment when he had begun to feel a want unsupplied by the sympathetic ministrations of the flat-

tering, mature feminine. The moment he vaunted Isabelle to himself as his discovery, honestly believing her the rarest of creatures, that moment he delivered himself bound to her.

Being a man, Nordlinger knew nothing of these things; Mrs. Robec, being a woman and wise after her kind, knew them perfectly. With the key her daughter had supplied she had spelled out from its beginning the cipher of his processes. But justice here cries her innocence of jealousy, petty or vulgar, toward her daughter. She was genuinely solicitous for the happiness of Isabelle; she knew Herbert Nordlinger's "type" marvelously well, and judged it incompatible with a wife's well-being. Confronted with this challenge to her resourcefulness, Mrs. Robec chose the course naturally dictated by her keen, restless brain. A Machiavellian strain in her led her to rejoice in taking the devious way to an end honestly believed just. A certain zest in exercising her known histrionic gift for the confounding of Nordlinger and the rescue of her girl must be added to the complex mixture, her motive.

To herself she phrased her plot shamelessly as designed to "draw the man's fire." She had the exact measure, she assured herself, of the attraction she might exert over a somewhat lonely, thoroughly sophisticated, disillusioned and gently sentimental bachelor of thirty-five. It would not be altogether a bore to her, this mild episodic flirtation, and it would bring forcibly before Isabelle's very eyes the desired object-lesson: the visible evidence of Herbert Nordlinger's instability. The plot had formed itself in her brain before Isabelle had finished her memorable confidence concerning her lover's declaration.

Nordlinger knew as little of Mrs. Robec's designs as he did of the processes that had brought him to his present state of restless dissatisfaction with his situation. Mrs. Robec's disinterestedness—which was indeed genuine—disarmed all possible suspicion of her attitude. She was frankly

appreciative of his attractive qualities, and since circumstances had seemed to force her into an attitude conceivably hostile to his interest, she had appeared more than ever disposed to "make it up" to him by every means in her power. Her sympathy, her alertness of perception, her responsiveness to his moods, seemed more and more grateful the more he meditated the possible evanescence of Isabelle's strange, unaccountable charm. His honest perplexity as to his feeling for her threw him back irresistibly on the delightful security of Mrs. Robec's understanding. Out of the confused whirl of his emotions emerged gratitude for the older woman's generous readiness to soften the hardship of his probation with her sympathy. Gratitude, deep admiration of her intellectual gifts and a lively sense of her charm combined to inspire a regard that a less analytical man might easily have mistaken for something deeper. Even Nordlinger felt that his sentiment for the mother challenged the genuineness of his passion for the daughter. Yet he never felt the slightest insincerity in the extravagant terms in which he expressed his homage to the older woman.

"Dear Mrs. Robec," he said one day when he found himself *en tête-à-tête* with her after a particularly formal, trying half-hour with Isabelle, "you are adorable. It is the tragedy of my life that I am capable of so high an appreciation and so low an achievement."

"Perhaps the appreciation is itself your achievement," she replied, with a smile—she always had a smile for these outbursts of enthusiasm.

"Yes, it is something just to understand," he admitted. "You see, I do know better than most, surely, your wonders. There is no one like you for understanding, for sympathy, for the truest companionship. When I'm blue I cheer myself with the idea that you're my kind—not that I'm like you, but that I know you. You smooth out so many rough places in life that, by Jove! you make it look almost alluring."

Mrs. Robec's outward amusement at such talk covered an inward gloating over the evident success of her manoeuvre. The man who talked thus might not, to be sure, be in love with her, but he was surely thoroughly out of love with Isabelle. Her feeling was purely impersonal; she had for Herbert Nordlinger only the kindest sentiments, and an interest that, she felt, could not go much further without becoming a menace to her own detached serenity. On general principles she had not the slightest objection to him as a husband for her daughter. But her conviction that they would never be happy together had become an *idée fixe*; under the influence of it she had undertaken a game that, even she knew, held its perils.

But now the game seemed to be ended; she had swept the board; her theory had vindicated itself. In this triumph the original motive had become obscured, and she had indeed got so far from the sense that it was Isabelle's happiness for which she had been playing that her final feeling of elation was scarcely tinged with a thought of how the *dénouement* of her plot was to affect the girl.

IV

THEY were seated together, mother and daughter, in the charming little tea-house that fronted the Sound from its position in the midst of a grassy rolling slope. It was by common agreement the loveliest spot in the Robec country estate—the place above all for the peaceful mood of this hot August day.

It was Isabelle who broke a silence that, on her part, had evidently had underlying it some mental disquietude.

"You know, mama, how I dislike gossip," she began abruptly, but with an energy that showed her resolved to plunge in and fetch to the surface the offending cause of her perturbation.

"Don't belittle the value of history in the making, Isabelle," Mrs. Robec

admonished. The very gaiety of her tone betrayed her consciousness of something to come.

But the light tone was lost on Isabelle, who proceeded in her most serious, most formally grave manner. "I think it must be my duty to tell you something that Mildred Barclay said to me yesterday. It's absurd and wrong for people to talk so, and you'll know best how to deal with it. I know, of course, how false it is, but people are so ready to believe everything—and you can't guard against such things unless you know—"

"Perhaps I would understand better if you told me what it was you heard," put in Mrs. Robec calmly.

"She said—Mildred Barclay—laughing as if everyone knew it, 'How terribly in love with your mother Herbert Nordlinger is.' She seemed to consider it quite to your credit." The recollection brought a hot flush to the girl's cheeks.

"And what did you answer?" pursued Mrs. Robec, still outwardly placid.

Isabelle's flush deepened, but her voice was firm. "I let her see that I considered such a remark beneath notice."

Mrs. Robec said nothing for a moment; she was thinking rapidly. It had flashed over her that here was perhaps the opportunity, held out by Isabelle herself, to administer the final, telling blow to the girl's preoccupied fancy. Undoubtedly this fancy—it could have been nothing more—had already been made to waver by the interval of waiting, by the object-lessons she had had, and by what she had just heard. Isabelle, her mother knew, was of those women whose love will never venture where the fullest confidence has not preceded. An inconstant or reluctant lover would be abhorrent enough to kill the germs of love in herself. As for Isabelle's opinion of a mother who would lend herself to the pampering of such a vacillating suitor—ah, Mrs. Robec felt herself heroically nerved for the sacrifice! She was prepared to endure a temporary misunderstanding for the

sake of her daughter's subsequent gratitude.

"Isabelle," she said, "you're very intolerant—you'll forgive me for saying it—and you pronounce very sweeping judgments. If Mildred's remark were true, I hope you wouldn't see in the fact anything to my discredit."

"Certainly not." The words were pronounced coldly. "It would not be in any way your fault." The emphasis on the final word implied that it would, assuredly, be her mother's misfortune.

But Mrs. Robec scarcely heeded the interpolation. "As a matter of fact, there's enough foundation of truth for Mildred's slander to illustrate all I've ever said to you about Herbert Nordlinger's shortcomings. I do not, of course, say that he is in love with me; yet he has given as much reason for thinking so as he has ever given for our believing him in love with you. No, let me finish my explanation—" as Isabelle started up with a sharp intake of her breath. "You've had time to see that he is a hopelessly restless, inconstant creature. I knew it, dear, from the first, and I'm glad you have shown no inclination to return to the consideration of his proposal of marriage."

Mrs. Robec paused, as if waiting for a sign of encouragement. The fact that it was not forthcoming, perhaps, led her on somewhat more recklessly than she had intended.

"I may tell you now, Isabelle, that at first I honestly feared the effect on your inexperience of such a clever man's apparent devotion. I don't mean that he wasn't honest and honorable and sincere; it isn't in Herbert Nordlinger to be anything else. But he's a little bit dissatisfied with what life has given him, and more than a little inclined to look for something it can never hold for him." Fairly launched now on a subject of which she knew herself the possessor of expert knowledge, Mrs. Robec took no note of the masque her daughter opposed to her address. She felt herself indeed her own best auditor.

"Probably he has been, in ten years, sincerely and honorably and honestly in love with a dozen girls—for a week at a time. Knowing his kind so well, I confess, now that it's all over, that I did enter into a little plot in your interest, my dear. Perhaps I encouraged, to an extent, his attentions to me; nothing could show you better how unstable the delightful man really is. It was very harmless and very simple—all his tastes, all his habits lead him to the society of women as mature and experienced as he is himself. He's not languishing for love of me—God forbid that he should come to that!—but he's really very fond of me, as I am of him. I count it a good thing that you know him, Isabelle, and your little passage of sentiment with him need never trouble you for an instant—it won't him. And I assure you—not that you don't yourself know it—he'll be vastly better as a friend than as a husband."

Mrs. Robec saw nothing remarkable in the fact that at this point Isabelle rose quietly. She even missed the significance of the even, perfectly controlled voice in which the question was asked:

"Is that all, mama?"

On her absent-minded answer Isabelle left her and walked slowly toward the house. Within an hour she had written and despatched a note—the briefest and most formal of notes—requesting Mr. Nordlinger's attendance a few days hence. The time designated was the day that marked the termination of their joint probation.

Nordlinger found her, on his arrival, in the little tea-house that had been the scene of her first hard lesson in the duplicity of her sex. He had not seen her for a number of days, and the old charm, which he had begun to suspect was more potent in absence than at immediate contact, had reasserted itself. He was relieved to find that her direct smile and welcoming hand held grateful promise of an hour undisturbed by qualms and scruples. She was grave today, as always, but there was a light in her eyes that indicated a suppressed

excitement, as of one weighted with a message.

With the directness that he had always recognized as her most salient characteristic, she went straight to her point. "Mr. Nordlinger, I thank you for coming here at my request," she began. "Six months ago today you paid me the very great honor of asking me to become your wife. It was my mother's wish that I should wait this long before deciding. I wish to give you my answer now."

Nordlinger preserved an admirable self-control while he confessed to himself, with inward stupefaction, that he had not kept the exact reckoning of the time. He had interpreted Mrs. Robec's condition, as he was confident that lady also had, in a somewhat less definite sense. He would never have presumed to take it with Isabelle's literalness. Astonishment kept him quiet while Isabelle proceeded with a calm in which he began hazily to discern something forced.

"I feel the honor more than ever, and the responsibility of deciding for my whole life and yours. I have thought of it very, very carefully, Mr. Nordlinger. I want you to know that I am not treating the matter lightly—but I cannot marry you."

Nordlinger's brain whirled. Amazement at her naïve challenge to his remissness was succeeded by greater amazement at her inexorable truthfulness, and then by an uneasy feeling that this girl's simple character contained involutions he had not dreamed of.

Had he been too ready to take for granted that her answer would be what he wished?—that the problem had lain solely in the determination of his own mind? Her final words, uttered without a break, in the low, steady voice, stripped bare his conceit. In that moment he guessed the abysses of his fatuous ignorance. He tried to steady himself with a question that he felt, even at the moment of uttering it, to be a clouding of the issue.

"Will you tell me," he said, "whether your decision has been influenced by

anything your mother may have said about me?"

For the first time, and with a springing of absurd hope, he noticed a flaw in her composure. Tears were ready to spring from behind her eyelids, and her underlip quivered for a pitiful moment.

"Yes," she said, with a suspicion of a catch in her voice. "But not, I'm sure, in any way that you can mean."

Slight as the change was, he seized on it for possible advantage. "Will you tell me what it was?"

In the beseeching look that met his he recognized Isabelle's transparent honesty more plainly than ever before. "I'd rather not," she answered falteringly. "It's—it's not what I like to say of my mother. But it's your right to know—I'll tell you if you really wish it."

"I leave it wholly to you." He was alive now to the danger of pressing her too far. "I wish to know only what you think I ought to know."

Isabelle was silent a moment. Her breath came hard once or twice, but even at this moment she could sit with her hands motionless in her lap. When she spoke her voice had the monotonous sound of one reciting a hard, dull lesson.

"She said first that you were hopelessly restless and inconstant—that she had known it from the first. She said she knew we could not long be happy together, and that she wished to save me from an unhappy marriage. She knew that you would naturally like a clever woman of the world better than an inexperienced girl. Then—" the girl barely hesitated before going bravely on—"then she said—my mother said that she encouraged your attentions to her, just to show me how easily you could change. She said in effect that you cared more for her than you ever had for me. My own mother deceived me and deceived you—it was disgraceful! Now you see why, even if I had once cared for you, I can never marry you."

At last the situation was clear to Nordlinger. Strangely enough, while

he understood far better than did Isabelle her mother's design, and knew its innocence according to the code of their circle, his distaste for the whole petty scheme was no less profound than hers. He had no grievance against Mrs. Robec; she had had every right to believe that she was playing the game with an equal who knew the rules. But the deviousness, the restlessness that led to such strained effort, the spoiled taste that savored nothing simple, had suddenly palled on him. He recognized with certainty that he was past the period of such strivings—that the time had come for a return to simpler, healthier objects. And with it came the added certainty that his love for Isabelle was real—was to be trusted. He loved her purity, her unaffected simplicity, her incapacity for dissimulation. Her one transparent little effort at deception touched him acutely—for she had failed absurdly to conceal her love for him, in spite of the pride that dictated the attempt.

Her pride! It was his danger—a danger that he must meet with the utmost wariness.

"I thank you more than I can tell you for your absolute truthfulness," he said. "Since your answer must be what it is, you have at least cleared all the ground. More than ever now I value your good friendship. Can't we, from this on, be the best of friends?"

Was there a faint hint of perplexed disappointment in the shadow that fell across her face? He dared not trust the hope that she might perhaps have expected from him something a little different.

"Yes, I would like to be your friend," she said, rather faintly.

"Then I take it from you that we're to forget these—all these disagreeable things you've been telling me; that we're to forget these six months; that we're to forget I ever told you I loved you; that we're to be just where we were before that time, only knowing each other infinitely better, and with an infinitely better chance for the

finest friendship? Is that to be the bargain?"

She had listened with her eyes turned away, dwelling on each phrase as he uttered it, as if to be sure of his exact meaning at every point. She was rallying her pride now for a final, decisive stand.

"Yes, we will be just friends," she said, and took the hand he extended.

"Then," he began again, and she was startled at a new note in his voice, "if all of this is forgotten, and is never to be mentioned between us again, I have still something to say to you.

Isabelle, I love you; I've never stopped loving you; I love you now better than ever, because I'm sure of my love, and I know you will be sure of it. Now tell me—and you dare tell me nothing but the truth—don't you, can't you love me?"

She looked at him a moment in complete bewilderment before she could realize the trick he had played on her. Then her head went suddenly into her hands, and she cried softly.

"Oh, you are always too clever for me," she wailed. "You've known all the time that I—that I love you."



SPRING ON THE COAST OF ITALY

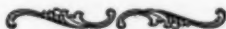
By Gertrude Huntington McGiffert

A PRIMROSE, a heart-throb,
The passionate sea,
Phantom tread of dead armies,
Press of things yet to be;

Lilting preludes, rash branches,
Ruined temples of old,
Flowering walls trailing coastwise,
Far snow-tiers of gold;

Plowed furrows of promise,
Green hilltops of sheep,
Flocks of birds on the sky-line,
Flocks of boats on the deep;

Bridal Spring! and I, waiting—
Oh, the passionate sea!
A primrose, a portent—
Come, come, Love, to me!



ALL the men who have mysteriously disappeared either ran away with a woman or from one.

EMBARRASSMENT—FINANCIAL AND OTHERWISE

By Walter E. Grogan

SIR THOMAS CARTARET, being supremely dissatisfied, briefly announced his intention of journeying to Australia. He also declared that his subsequent movements would be uncertain. All efforts to discover the reason of his decision were met with baffling reserve. Pressed possibly a trifle too much, he had shown considerable choler.

Fellow-members at his club shrugged their shoulders, and some few of them, his temporary creditors after a rather disastrous Goodwood, reminded him delicately but pointedly of his indebtedness. He paid them, not without further choler, and they left him, thanking the gods that they had been satisfied. The letting of his seat in Yorkshire to a cotton broker and the selling of his small stud of race-horses set loose a flood of wild surmises.

When the holder of a Stuart-created baronetcy suddenly determines to seek the Colonies for no ascertainable reason there are a hundred ready to supply one. Tommy Cartaret had lived for six years the accepted life of his fellows. He had lunched, dined, shot, yachted, raced and made love with the usual languid eagerness. He had never manifested a love of travel, or any desire to be otherwise than anybody else. Beyond a personal reserve that was easily attributable to a lack of near relations—for who else cares about purely personal matters?—he was in no way different from any other wealthy, well-bred young man-about-town.

The letting of the seat and the

selling of the stud were eloquent. Those in his world whispered to one another that Tommy Cartaret was dipped pretty deeply. He dined his lawyer at his club more than once, and was noticed to be in earnest conversation with him. The lawyer, Elton Banks, of Banks, Barton & Banks, looked grave. That clinched it. Tommy Cartaret was ruined. Several members discussed the possibility of the entail being cut. Two or three declared that there was a private sale of Pallerton to the cotton spinner, and that its announcement was postponed from motives of delicacy until Tommy had departed.

As a matter of fact, Cartaret fancied himself hard hit by Lady Mary Engleton, who had recently accepted the elderly Marquis of Beaumerlane, after a long, violent, but discreetly hidden flirtation with Sir Thomas. In a sudden disgust with life as lived in his set, he resolved upon the course of action which had aroused the imaginations of his acquaintances. The gravity of old Elton Banks, friend as well as man of business to the late Sir George Cartaret, father of the young baronet, was occasioned by Tommy's decision and an insular horror of a Colonial matrimonial alliance for so old a baronetcy.

Sir Thomas was not aware of the extent of the rumors concerning him. Something of it he guessed; the delicate reminders of his club creditors were not too elaborately veiled, but the really remarkable assiduity with which the rumors were circulated was accompanied by a discreet secrecy.

The situation stood thus when Mrs. Hurtington imparted serious information to her daughter Enid. They had dined at home and were driving to the Porchesters', who were giving a dance. In the seclusion of the brougham Mrs. Hurtington spoke. She chose her time with the careful forethought which is characteristic of managing motherhood. She was not sure of Enid—once or twice there had been signs of revolt when Mrs. Hurtington had insisted upon quite minor matters. Enid was pretty, but her mother, calmly critical, analyzed it as the prettiness of youth, and was therefore in a hurry. There was an additional motive for haste—she herself was not old, was a fairly well-dowered widow with no hampering post-dated jealousy, and Enid was an only child. Enid well married—her regard for the sacredness of motherhood would not entertain the idea of less—she would be free to pursue her own path.

Enid was an heiress—that simplified matters. But it also increased the number of undesirables. A commercial instinct—Mrs. Hurtington was not unconnected remotely with trade—united with the maternal instinct and demanded a liberal interpretation of "well married."

Enid had been friendly with Sir Thomas. Mrs. Hurtington remembered that painfully. She also remembered that Enid was loyal to friends. She herself had looked with friendliness upon the baronet. She had hoped higher, but Sir Thomas Cartaret was well-off, and the title was respectably old. The competition of the lesser skirted actresses with big eyes and no voices was severe in the case of the peerage, to which she had looked. Enid's fortune was big enough to warrant that hope. But—there was the question of haste, and Enid was peculiar.

Then came the rumor of Tommy Cartaret's financial embarrassment, which immediately classed him among undesirables. A mere baronetcy was, commercially speaking, unthinkable. There was also a viscount palpably

épris, a man with select connections, a man undoubtedly useful to a woman as a son-in-law. Lord Erget was somewhat older than Enid—but all time is comparative, and twenty-five years' difference may be regarded leniently—a widower, but with daughters only, and all married.

Mrs. Hurtington approached the matter with some trepidation. Enid's former slight suggestions of revolt were unsettling. She made a rapid computation of the time required for driving two smart bays from Queen's Gate to Berkeley Square, and was relieved that it would admit of no lengthened argument with her daughter. She thought she knew Enid well enough to be sure that she would not act in open disobedience until confirmed in her own opinion by heated argument. The moral support of an angry altercation is great.

"Oh, Enid," she said suddenly, near Sloane street, "I have heard some unpleasant news about Sir Thomas Cartaret."

"Unpleasant—do you mean bad, mother?" Enid inquired.

She was conscious of a sudden catch at her heart. Demanded suddenly for a definition of her feelings toward Sir Thomas, Enid would have described them as "chumminess." In this she would have been merely following her sex's love of evasion. For three years they had been intimately friendly. She believed that that was a cloak on his part for the hiding of something warmer. She knew that it was so in her own case, although possibly she had not admitted as much absolutely to her own self. Sir Thomas, as we have seen, had no thought of hiding anything. The last year of his friendship for Enid ran placidly beside his clandestine flirtation with Lady Mary. Even the added friendliness Enid had perceived and misconstrued was but the outcome of that. It is possible for a man to be more in love with love than with a lover, in which case he is dangerously kind to many.

"I suppose I mean bad, Enid."

"Bad news. He is not ill, mother?"

Mrs. Hurtington did not like her daughter's tone—and was all the more pleased at her forethought in confining the explanation to the few minutes a brougham occupies between Sloane street and Berkeley Square.

"No, not ill. A man may recover of that." A healthy woman herself, she waived aside all illnesses as trifles. "He is ruined. I do not know how, but my informant is quite reliable as to the fact."

She smiled a little retrospectively over the tête-à-tête, during which Colonel Bulger had disclosed the gossip.

"Ruined!" Enid was young enough not to be able to realize to herself what that exactly meant.

"Don't repeat me like that, Enid!" Mrs. Hurtington plunged at the explanation, speaking very hurriedly. "Yes, ruined. I dare say it was something very disreputable. He is reticent—won't speak of it, will not consult any friends—and all that is very suspicious. I suppose he will be at the Porchesters'. Lady Porchester is absurdly fond of him—oh, don't sniff, child, that is quite patent. If Porchester weren't so—well, perhaps you had better not know *that*. What I wish to say, Enid, is this: you will not speak to him."

"Not speak to him, mother?" The tone certainly suggested revolt.

"I don't mean cut him."

"Thank you, mother. I'm glad you are straining a point. It would be rather awkward to cut a man with whom one had been chummy, merely because his bank balance was not so great as formerly!"

Mrs. Hurtington esteemed it excellent policy to ignore the ironic outburst.

"However badly he has behaved you cannot very well cut a friend of the Porchesters' in their own house. But your programme will be full."

"You do not not know that he has behaved badly."

"You never know absolutely anything. And a man rarely conceals things which are not bad. Why

should he? The general impression is that he has something shady to conceal."

"I do not think Colonel Bulger is a good judge of a man's conduct." Enid had shrewdness and could hit unpleasantly hard. "A boudoir man is inoculated with the virus of gossip. Are my programmes always to be full?"

Mrs. Hurtington, stung by the reference to Colonel Bulger—it is possible to extract amusement from the acquaintance of a man of whom one is secretly contemptuous—was betrayed into an admission.

"I do not understand your reference to Colonel Bulger. I did not mention his name—I referred to a general impression."

"As filtered through Colonel Bulger," interjected Enid.

"And as to programmes—Sir Thomas Cartaret goes abroad. You will meet him tonight, but I hope not again. I have heard the Colonies mentioned. There is a sinister suggestion about flight to the Colonies."

"He is going away?"

"Luckily. You will see how necessary it is to be discreet? You have been too friendly—that, I admit, is partly my fault. I was deceived in him. He has a plausible manner—so many men have. But now—There is nothing extreme in a full programme. He will understand. You are an heiress—that should render you careful with a man who is ruined."

"Mother!"

"It is no use, Enid. We live in a world which we must accept at its true value."

She was glad Berkeley Square was now quite close. She fully appreciated the mistake in tactics she had made in admitting Cartaret's departure. The mistake flurried her.

"You have known Sir Thomas three years. That is a long time in which to be silent. Lord Erget has known you two months, and it is only your own folly that has kept him silent."

•She was not sure that her comparison of the two men was altogether wise.

Sir Thomas was handsome, and Lord Erget—one of the satirical weeklies had refused to caricature him on the ground that Nature had done it already far more effectually than any mere artist.

"Sir Thomas is going away quite soon?"

"I believe so. It is the wisest thing he can do. It is so awkward explaining things." She felt guilty in suggesting matters of which she had no real knowledge, but she excused herself on the plea of Enid's happiness.

Enid remained silent, and her mother hoped that her silence meant submission.

She shook hands with Lady Porchester in a brown study, and drifted through the rooms dreamily. Sir Thomas Cartaret, being ruined, was it possible that a knowledge of financial embarrassment had rendered him silent? It was a pretty point; it wrinkled her brow in perplexity, and fluttered her heart. So occupied with her own surmises and musings was she that she had no resentment for her mother's suggestions.

Sir Thomas Cartaret appeared to avoid her. He came late—she saw him struggle toward his hostess in the train of a few who had come on from the Greenfields' reception—but when they met a quarter of an hour afterwards he merely smiled and bowed. She was then with Jimmy Barteth. He was one of the clubmen who had gently pressed for a small outstanding debt, and Sir Thomas recognized the awkwardness of meeting in a friendly way a man to whom he had said choleric words. This fact was naturally unknown to Enid. But Cartaret's action prompted consequences. Half an hour later she summoned him to her side. Her color was heightened, and her eyes glittered with a veiled excitement.

"Won't you ask me to dance?" she demanded.

"Certainly," he said gravely. "I should have done so before, but Mrs. Hurtington told me——"

"That my programme was full? It isn't. I have saved you two waltzes."

He considered her curiously. Her manner was strange, and he had no key to its meaning. She had been rather shy of overtures in his acquaintance with her; he had been in the habit of regarding her as rather piquantly anachronistic, a survival of mid-Victorianism. There was a latent suggestion of defiance in her attitude under his consideration.

"The two are together," he said, scanning the programme. "I'm awfully afraid I'm engaged for the second."

"You can apologize afterward."

"Is it a command?"

"Yes." She was nervously playing with her fan. "I want to talk with you, Tommy. I haven't seen you for a long while—you've treated me shamefully."

"It carries its own punishment," he said, rather surprised to discover that he was unaccountably sincere. Her heightened color and suggestion of defiance enhanced her prettiness. He wondered at the cause; the effect was wholly charming.

"Has there been a reason?" Enid's manner was direct.

"Yes," he answered, no less directly. A man intervening, Sir Thomas took his problem to a woman in pink tulle, and was peculiarly distraught throughout the dance. The woman in pink tulle had an uncomfortable feeling that something had gone awry in her bodice, Sir Thomas stared so fixedly at her and said so very little.

"By Jove, jealous!" he said suddenly. He had an embarrassing habit of speaking aloud when much perplexed. The woman in pink tulle said, "I beg your pardon?" in a weak voice, and was unfeignedly glad when she was delivered up safely and quite relieved that he did not claim her for the second dance. Ever afterward she expected to hear of the incarceration of Sir Thomas by the Lunacy Commissioners.

Cartaret was no vainer than the average man. He had never regarded

the possibility of Enid's loving him—because he did not love her. But her question left him little loophole for doubt. She had heard of Lady Mary. That was quite certain. And it had altered her. That was obvious. He had been chummy with her for three years. Would this mean a break? It suddenly occurred to him that he would not like a break. Enid was necessary to him—she understood him. It is invariably necessary to a man to be understood. The less there is to understand the more emphatic is the necessity.

The prospect of Australia was by no means so alluring. An interest in life suddenly emerged from the superimposed chaos of boredom he had deemed fitting to the memory of Lady Mary. The interest centered in the two dances demanded by Enid.

"We will sit them out," she determined quite brusquely. "There is a small conservatory not generally known." She led the way, skilfully avoiding her mother. Her manner was full of latent electricity. She chose seats remote from the door and screened by palms—Lady Porchester's own device. She gave Cartaret the impression of a person nerved to undergo an ordeal.

"This is going to be an awkward interview, Tommy," she said. "I don't know what you will think of me at the end. But I am taking the right course; I am quite sure of that."

"I am quite sure of that, also," he agreed vaguely.

"You have acknowledged that there is a reason why you have not been near me?"

"Yes."

"It—it has existed for some time?"

"I must say 'yes' again." It was extraordinary, looking backward, to realize how long it had existed.

"But has grown more acute recently?" Her manner had a delightful embarrassment. The interview was proving more awkward than she had expected. She was aware that men were sensitive about money matters.

"Er—yes. These things generally

grow—er—toward a crisis of some sort."

"Yes, I suppose so. Of course I know very little about them." It was her turn to suggest vagueness.

"I presume so."

"Now that I know I can understand and appreciate your reason for not seeing so much of me lately."

"Well, er—it—I suppose it made a difference."

"It ought not to have."

"I—I am afraid I don't quite follow you, Enid."

"We were such good chums, Tommy. I think you ought to have confided in me."

"It was all kept so dark—for obvious reasons," he explained.

"You were hoping that things would come right?"

"Something like that," he admitted.

"You hardly realized how near?"

"One never does."

"I suppose it is ir retrievable?" Enid was determined to have full justification for her conduct.

"Oh, quite. There is an absolute final end," he said cheerfully.

"I am very sorry," Enid murmured.

"Er—that's very good of you. It is of course a let-down even if one doesn't care much."

"And you do?"

"At the time—I am getting used to it now."

"And you are going away?"

"It seemed the best thing to do in the circumstances. I—I had to consider the woman."

"You—you thought it would be better for her?"

"You see, she naturally would not care to see me about—after that. It might be painful."

"I think you wrong her, Tommy," Enid said softly.

"Do you think so? There was the position—I see that now. And the money." Lady Mary had chosen with financial wisdom. "She is far better off as it is." He spoke with cheerfulness, surprised that there was no longer any sore feeling with Lady Mary.

"I don't think she is," Enid said,

looking steadily at her fan. "Why did you not believe in me, Tommy? When I first heard of your loss——"

"That is an extreme way of putting it," he expostulated.

"Is there any hope of—of its being otherwise?" she demanded, in some alarm.

"Oh, no—of course not." He was growing somewhat bewildered.

"When I first heard of your loss I was sorry——"

"Were you?" Such was the manner of women, even the frankest of them. She was obviously jealous, and yet she declared her sorrow at the rupture of the Lady Mary entanglement. "Do you know, Enid, I would rather you weren't sorry."

"That is generous of you," she murmured. "But naturally I cannot help it."

"I'd rather you were glad."

"I couldn't be that!" she exclaimed, horrified. "Unless— Oh, I see." She grew very red, to Cartaret's vast amazement. "It—it gives me the power—Tommy, you must let me help you to replace what you have lost. You must—you must!"

Cartaret gazed at her in the utmost bewilderment.

"Your loss cannot lessen our mutual——" She grew more and more embarrassed. It was far more difficult than she had imagined. "I don't

want you to go away." She plunged at it with a pretty gesture of surrender, looking him straight in the face, her cheeks burning.

"I—I don't think I want to go away," he said quietly. There was a light in her eyes that made him catch the meaning of something nobler and truer than Lady Mary had ever suggested. It brushed aside all the perplexities that hedged her words. He understood her eyes if he did not understand her conversation.

"I—I had to say it," she said bravely. "When mother told me you were ruined I knew that you were too honorable to speak. It explained a good deal."

Cartaret gasped. In a moment the cross-purposes at which they had played were discovered. Enid knew nothing of Lady Mary, and because she thought him ruined and thought that he loved her—she was wiser here than he. She had made a brave sacrifice of mid-Victorianism.

"The reports of my—er—ruin have been much exaggerated," he said gravely. "I—I certainly was near it not long ago"—he added mentally, "blind ass that I was!"—"but not now, Enid, not now. As a matter of fact I'm a richer man than I was because——" He let his eyes complete the sentence which Enid found perfectly satisfactory.



TWILIGHT

By Charles L. O'Donnell

IN carmine cloak the gipsy Day
Knocked at Eve's monastery bars;
Now comes he, novice cowed in gray,
To light the candles of the stars.

LA FILLE DU COCHER

Par Maurice Mayre

QUAND la petite Suzy eut seize ans, elle jeta son bonnet par-dessus les moulins. Sans doute le bonnet avait des ailes, les moulins n'étaient pas bien hauts, car ce fut une chose aisée. Elle sortit, un beau matin, du misérable logis où elle vivait avec son père, Nicolas le cocher, et s'achemina à petits pas vers le boulevard Saint-Michel. Elle avait enveloppé dans un journal deux chemises, deux paires de bas, un corsage de toile. Portant ce bagage modeste, elle entra joyeusement dans la vie, car elle était pleine de confiance en elle-même, à cause de sa peau couleur de lune, de ses seins durs, de la ligne de son corps et de ce trouble extraordinaire qu'elle remarquait depuis longtemps sur le visage des hommes qu'elle rencontrait.

Elle se rendit dans une chambre d'hôtel où l'attendait un étudiant brun. Ce n'était pas par amour qu'elle venait le retrouver. Ce n'était pas non plus le dégoût de la pauvreté, l'horreur du travail, qui la faisaient fuir sa maison. Elle changeait de vie pour satisfaire un désir obsédant et victorieux, celui de boire avec des pailles ces consommations étranges, ces mélanges inconnus qu'elle voyait aux terrasses des cafés.

Suzy n'avait pas de cœur; elle n'aimait pas son père, elle n'aimait pas son amant, et ce devait être par la suite le secret de sa puissance, de n'agir que pour des motifs inattendus et secrets.

Rassasiée de boissons américaines, elle quitta l'étudiant pour un riche Roumain. Elle désira l'argent et le luxe, non pour les beaux appartements et les toilettes élégantes, mais seule-

ment à cause de la possession d'un gramophone qui était, à ses yeux, le privilège des classes dirigeantes, le symbole de la fortune. L'envie de figurer en maillot sur des cartes postales décida sa vocation théâtrale, lui fit étudier la musique, le chant et la danse.

Elle devint célèbre. Elle eut pour amants des propriétaires de courses, des banquiers, des directeurs de journaux. On parla de la forme de ses robes, de son collier de perles, de sa grâce incomparable quand elle dansait. On se la disputa, et elle passa de l'un à l'autre, par caprice, préférant tour à tour celui-ci parce qu'il était chauve, celui-là parce qu'il avait beaucoup de cheveux, l'un parce qu'il avait une grosse main carrée, l'autre parce qu'il avait un nègre pour domestique.

Elle ne pensait jamais à son père, sauf, parfois, quand elle hélait un fiacre, le soir, et alors elle mordait ses lèvres et son petit visage d'enfant prenait une expression méchante.

Nicolas le cocher avait souffert longtemps du départ de sa fille. Ce n'est pas une chose rare chez les pauvres que cette fuite des enfants vers les hôtels garnis, les cafés, tous les endroits lumineux. Il s'y accoutuma lentement, parce qu'il savait que c'était dans l'ordre, que d'autres filles de cochers étaient parties de même. Il considéra ce coup du sort comme la suite de la mauvaise chance qu'il avait toujours frappé.

Nicolas, en effet, était parmi ces hommes qu'un destin impitoyable persécute quotidiennement. On attire le malheur quand on en porte sur ses

épaules une somme trop grande, qu'on le sait et qu'on y pense.

Avec sa barbe triste, son vieux chapeau bossué, Nicolas éloignait de sa voiture les promeneurs élégants. On ne le prenait que pour des courses interminables et c'étaient toujours des gens qui n'étaient susceptibles que de pourboires dérisoires. Même, par sa mine humble, l'aspect morne de son équipage, il appelait à lui les voyageurs économes, ceux qui ont à transporter de lourds fardeaux, les familles qui partent en voyage par la gare de Lyon avec plusieurs enfants et plusieurs malles, les pauvres qui déménagent pour trente sous de fiacre. Il n'était jamais victorieux dans ces luttes d'injures que les cochers engagent entre eux, parce que son esprit était lent à la réplique. Si sa voiture en accrochait une autre et s'il y avait un débat, il avait toujours tort et l'agent lui parlait avec sévérité.

Du haut de son siège, il chercha longtemps sa fille dans Paris. Il crut la voir, une fois, sortant d'un restaurant de nuit avec des jeunes gens. Mais il transportait un homme autoritaire et pressé, et le devoir professionnel l'obligea à continuer sa route.

Plusieurs années passèrent. Il vieillit dans la solitude. Sa seule pensée était de retrouver Suzy pour lui dire qu'il lui pardonnait, qu'il l'aimait toujours, pour l'embrasser, la voir de temps en temps. Au hasard de ses courses, dans des coupés, des automobiles, il vit de fins visages qu'il croyait être le visage de Suzy. Il fouettait alors son maigre cheval, mais sa mauvaise chance voulait qu'il fût toujours distancé.

Enfin, un jour, une voisine vint lui dire qu'elle avait lu dans un journal l'adresse de sa fille. Ce fut un beau jour pour lui. Il brossa ses habits râpés, mit une cravate, fit claquer son fouet comme s'il était un jeune cocher de vingt ans qui va voir son amoureuse.

Nicolas arriva devant une belle maison sur les Champs-Élysées. Des chauffeurs d'automobile éclatèrent de rire en le voyant. Son pauvre équipage faisait comme une tache de misère

sur le luxe de l'avenue. Nicolas hésita longtemps, puis éteignit sa pipe et se décida à entrer.

— Ton cheval va prendre le mors aux dents! cria quelqu'un.

Il essuya ses pieds plusieurs minutes avant d'oser les poser sur le tapis de l'escalier.

Qu'allait dire Suzy? Serait-elle heureuse de le voir?

Il pressa en tremblant le bouton de la sonnette.

Un laquais en livrée parut. Par la porte ouverte, Nicolas aperçut des tableaux, des étoffes, des objets d'une forme inconnue. Très loin, dans un salon rempli d'une douce lumière, il y avait un groupe de jeunes gens, des femmes en toilette, un monsieur décoré qui avait l'air très bon.

— Qu'est-ce que vous voulez? dit le domestique.

Mais les paroles ne vinrent pas sur les lèvres de Nicolas. Il balbutia, il laissa tomber son chapeau.

Il vit une seconde le visage de sa fille paraître et disparaître, le temps de le regarder, de le reconnaître et de froncer les sourcils avec un air de colère.

Le domestique répéta sa question.

— C'est au sujet d'une course qu'on a oublié de me payer, dit Nicolas, mais je me suis trompé d'étage, excusez-moi.

Il remonta sur sa voiture et il fouetta son cheval.

— Un cocher qui pleure, dit un gamin.

Les années passèrent encore et Nicolas s'efforça de ne plus penser à Suzy. Il y réussit. Il l'oublia presque. Il cessa de pouvoir évoquer ses traits et sa voix. Son image devint un fantôme imprécis et qui s'éloignait chaque jour.

Plusieurs fois, Suzy vit son père, et plusieurs fois elle détourna les yeux. Elle rougissait de son origine et prétendait être la fille d'un général espagnol. Elle parlait souvent de son père à ses amis. Il avait été blessé dans diverses batailles, et le roi d'Espagne avait tenu à le décorer de sa main. Elle prétendait qu'elle ne pouvait y penser sans être émue. Il l'aimait beaucoup, mais

il avait les idées de sa caste et il l'avait reniée parce qu'elle était actrice. A force d'en parler, elle y crut presque et elle devint d'un orgueil démesuré sur tout ce qui touchait à lui.

Un jour, dans la maison qu'habitait Nicolas, un ouvrier mourut laissant une petite fille de quatre ans. Elle était orpheline. Nicolas la recueillit et l'adoptait. Il l'appela Suzy et il se mit à l'aimer de tout son cœur.

Il avait maintenant oublié la première Suzy, sa fille. Les années avaient ridé ses traits; sa barbe pendait plus tristement, son aspect était plus minable. L'alcool, un labeur ingrat, les intempéries avaient obscurci sa mémoire. Il se souvenait à peine de sa vie passée. Il n'avait de plaisir que lorsqu'il prenait sa nouvelle fille sur le siège, à côté de lui, et lorsqu'il pouvait, avec ses cinq sous d'étrenne, lui acheter un jouet.

Or, un soir de neige, il rentrait à Montrouge et descendait la rue Royale. Sa fille adoptive avait très froid et souffrait dans ses petits doigts.

— Tu vas être bientôt dans ton lit, disait Nicolas.

Et il se hâtait.

Un groupe le héla; il y avait des messieurs, une dame, et, par habitude, il s'arrêta.

C'était Suzy. Elle reconnut son père et vit avec étonnement une petite fille à côté de lui.

— Qu'est-ce que c'est que cette enfant? dit-elle à Nicolas.

— C'est ma fille.

Et il y avait de l'orgueil dans sa voix.

— Ce n'est pas vrai, reprit Suzy, tu mens.

Nicolas se mit à rire avec simplicité.

— Ah! pour sûr! c'est ma fille.

Suzy écarta la fourrure qui cachait

ses traits et regarda son père bien en face. Ses lèvres tremblaient. Elle prit des pièces d'or dans sa bourse et les donna à Nicolas.

— Dis-moi la vérité!

Nicolas se balançait de droite à gauche, partagé entre la joie et la surprise et dit:

— Pour sûr! c'est ma fille! Je peux pas dire autre chose.

La jalousie, l'amour, des sentiments inconnus montèrent comme un marée dans l'âme de Suzy. Il lui sembla que sa vie s'écroulait et que c'était son bonheur qui était assis là, à la place de la petite fille, sur le siège du misérable fiacre. Elle se pencha ardemment vers son père en lui disant:

— Est-ce que tu ne me reconnais pas? Est-ce que tu ne reconnais pas Suzy, ta fille?

Nicolas promena sur elle un morne regard. Cette toilette, ces bijoux, ne lui rappelaient plus rien. Il avait, par une merveilleuse transposition, reporté sur l'enfant qu'il avait recueillie son premier amour pour sa fille.

— Faites excuse, madame, y a erreur, dit-il.

Et une grande sincérité était dans sa voix, et il aurait bien voulu être loin de cette belle dame dont les questions le gênaient.

— Papa, j'ai froid, rentrons, dit la petite fille à Nicolas.

Alors Nicolas répéta, tout confus:

— Faites excuse!

Et il fouetta son cheval, qui partit au galop.

— Papa! Papa! se mit à crier Suzy, et elle courut, les bras tendus, dans la neige.

Trop tard! Le vent emporta ses cris. Le fiacre n'était plus, au loin, qu'un fantôme cahotant qui disparut dans la nuit blanchie.



"Is she the reigning belle at every tea?"
"Yes, and she not only reigns but she pours."

March, 1907—10

DANNY DEEVER, DRAMATIST

A TALE OF A FIRST-NIGHT

(With Apologies to Kipling)

By Harold Susman

“WHAT are the people clapping for?”
Said Leading Man, dismayed.
“The author out, the author out,”
The Leading Lady said.

“What makes you look so white, so white?”
Said Leading Man, dismayed.
“I’m dreading what I’ve got to watch,”
The Leading Lady said.

*For they’re guying Danny Deever, and
They’re guying his new play,
And that they do not like it, they
Are trying to convey.
They are chaffing, they are laughing
In a horrid, hateful way.
And they’re roasting Danny Deever in the morning!*

“What makes the author breathe so hard?”
Said Leading Man, dismayed.
“He’s got a cold, he’s got a cold,”
The Leading Lady said.
“What makes that woman’s head hang down?”
Said Leading Man, dismayed.
“He is her son, he is her son,”
The Leading Lady said.

*They are guying Danny Deever, with
A cheering, jeering sound
Throughout the whole theatre hear
The clamor loud resound,
As dogs, when out a-hunting, run
A rabbit to the ground—
They’ll be roasting Danny Deever in the morning!*

“They’ll take the show off in a week,”
Said Leading Man, dismayed.
“We’ll have to get another job,”
The Leading Lady said.
“And jobs are not found ev’ry day,”
Said Leading Man, dismayed.
“The author’s much worse off than we,”
The Leading Lady said.

*They are guying Danny Deever—I
Would not be in his place!
His lips and hands are twitching, and
All ashen is his face.
In England they would "boo" him, but
This is a worse disgrace.
They'll be roasting Danny Deever in the morning!*



HIS POSITION

"I AM in favor of war with Turkey!" grimly announced Uncle Timrod Tarpy, during a recent session of the Sit and Argue Club. "I clamor for war—"

"But, squire—" in an expostulatory way began Professor Twiggs, the village schoolmaster, "at present, you know, there is really no—"

"Aw, I don't admire missionaries overly much, anyhow," rasped the veteran, "and I don't especially care how many of them the Turks choose to slaughter. So far as I know, I have never seen more than half-a-dozen or so Turks in my life, and I'm dead sure I have never backsheeshed—I guess that's the word—or been backsheeshed by any of 'em. I care nothing about the Concert of Europe—I have no ear for music, anyhow. And yet I am unalterably, frenziedly and ferociously in favor of war with Turkey, and I'll tell you why:

"In the first place, I don't like the way the Sultan's whiskers are trimmed in the pictures. Secondly, whenever my rheumatism is hectoring me with unusual virulence, as it has been of late, I am certain to fall over every confounded ottoman in the house. Then, my nephew, who recently emerged from a certain paltry fresh-water college, through which he percolated at my expense, smokes them dratted Turkish cigarettes all over the place and pretty near as plentifully as the water used to come down at Lodore in the old Third Reader. And, besides all that, like every other inhabitant of a rural village who has sense enough to be tired of anything, I am so weary of the very sight and proximity of my neighbors that I hate them with a fervent hate. But, blame it, they are all either related to me or to somebody to whom I am related, or own horses that I may want to swap for, or belong to the same church or lodge that I do, or are otherwise so situated that it is not expedient for me to vent my spleen on them.

"Therefore, I am in favor of war with Turkey—war to the knife and the knife to the hilt, let the chips fall where they happen to! So far as I can see, Turkey is safe prey for me."

TOM P. MORGAN.



"HAS my husband much fever, doctor?"
"No, not much. Only about fifty dollars' worth."



HERESY

MRS. BATES—Doesn't she belong to the Homemakers' Club any more?

MRS. GATES—No. We expelled her because she was always staying home to do her housework.

THE STIRRUP-CUP

By May Harris

SINCE the parting had to be, it was fitting it should take place in a splendid amity, and no one withheld the tithe it was less a duty than an individual right to offer.

Adams had been the man to gather the threads of friendship and to make each separate filament of account in the web of his life. And to have done this in the middle years with the completeness that comes to many only at the close of long experiences and failures was merely one of his achievements. He was a man who had made the part fit him, as well as himself the part, and he carried still with the impulse and gallant dash of youth the burden of honors and responsibilities other men would have shown signs of stress in bearing. But he showed none. At fifty-three his hair was thick and brown, with no perceptible gray; his eye as quick, his smile as ready as thirty years before.

"By-and-bye," an envious politician with crow's-feet, gray hair and stooped shoulders, commented, "by-and-bye, he'll seem juvenile. One can't challenge age without eventually losing."

But in this manifestation his friends offered him he seemed in no danger of losing.

The man who a good many years before had been his political leader, and who had been passed and outclassed in the race for preferment by Adams, was one of those who on this occasion spoke with enthusiasm of his patriotism, his service to his country, and his future—outside this present mission of delicate diplomacy which would exile him from among them for a while as a statesman.

"Champagne sentiment," one of the reporters said to a fellow-worker; but the answer came back at once, "I am not so sure!"

It seemed that if what Adams commanded was not the real thing, it could at least successfully masquerade, and he accepted it frankly at its highest value in his well-chosen words of thanks.

He was a very handsome man, and the fact had its recognition in the whisper that buzzed along the line of women in the gallery. He had escaped the misfortune of the fortunate and was still erectly slender. In his evening clothes, with a white flower in his buttonhole, he had the air of poise, the ease of manner, still hopeless of attainment to so many of his followers and fellow-workers. What he said was to the point; his thanks rang sincerely; his sentiment was fine and of courageous trend, and his speech steered clear of the florid emphasis that so often mars the worth of the spoken thought.

It was an occasion, as the newspapers celebrated the next day, of unusual and delightful good-fellowship. It was said of Adams in various-sounding phrases that he would take with him the godspeed not only of the coterie of his intimate friends and his political fellow-workers, but of the whole of "our great and glorious country."

As the banquet began to show signs of breaking up, one of the women who had occupied a central seat in the gallery rose and slipped unobtrusively from her place, leaving the impression of a tall, spare woman of sixty, with

iron-gray hair and a black silk gown plentifully trimmed with jet.

"Mrs. Adams!" one of the women whispered to her neighbor, as she followed the undistinguished figure with her lorgnette.

"My dear, you're joking! His mother, you mean!"

"No, his wife."

Mrs. Adams went down the stairs with stiff, careful steps. She had rheumatism, and besides she had never been elastic. She passed unnoticed in the thronging stream of people through the lobby into the street.

The Adams carriage, a little ahead of time, was drawn up at the curb in precedence of the two or three others that waited.

Even the coachman was sharing the importance of the hour, and his face fell in disappointment when his mistress, a frumpy, black figure, made her unexpected appearance. But she stopped the footman who had jumped down, also crestfallen, to open the door of the carriage.

"Wait; I want you to call me a hansom!" she commanded in her colorless voice. "I'm going to leave the carriage for Mr. Adams. He'll be tired and want to get right home. Tell him I've gone on to my sister's, and I'll meet him in the morning, at the pier."

The coachman touched his hat. He knew the details of their plans for leaving. Mrs. Adams had decided to spend the last night of her stay with her sister, who was an invalid with small chance of being alive on Mrs. Adam's return.

Her sister lived in a distant part of town—a long and disagreeable drive—and her long habit of sparing her husband every possible infliction made her rearrange her plans. He needed rest; he had been on a wearing strain, and she knew intuitively that he was nervous over the new duties looming before him. She felt sure her thought was the right one, and she got into the hansom, the footman signaled, and was driven off through the brilliance of the midnight streets.

She was tired herself—there had been so much to do, to think of. She leaned back against the cushions in the effort to relax the vigilant stiffness of attitude that had become second nature.

The scene she had just left was still vividly before her: the glittering, flower-decked table, her husband's splendid presence, and the throng of people who had gathered to do him honor. The streets with its gay, hurrying crowds became blurred to her eyes and she put her hand into her bag for a handkerchief.

It was still in her hand a few moments later when two or three policemen and the horrified owner of the motor which had run into the cab extricated her from the wreck. The driver and his horse were both dead, and it seemed a miracle to the doctors when her injuries were examined that she had escaped even for a few hours of life.

When Mrs. Adams came back to consciousness the room where she lay in the hospital was very still, the light dim and shaded, and the nurse, carefully vigilant in her fresh blue-and-white uniform, sitting beside her.

She wondered at the unfamiliar strangeness of the little room with its dead white walls—surely not her walls; they had pink roses climbing up and up. . . . It was strange. She put out her hand gropingly, and tried to turn her head to see the face on the pillow. There was no pillow—no face. Her eyes, wide and startled, met only those of the nurse who put the wandering hand gently back.

Mrs. Adams looked at her dumbly. The pain that had pulled her back to consciousness was beginning its sharp thrust, and she groaned.

The nurse bent over her instantly; there was a tiny stab from the hypodermic needle. Another strange surge of sickening pain swept over her; she tried to move, but could not, and the nurse put a gentle hand on her arm.

"Don't try to move—you've been so badly hurt. But I've given you

something that will make you easy directly."

"Morphine?" Mrs. Adams asked in a difficult whisper.

She had often said nothing would make her take a dose of the drug in any of its forms, but now she wanted to tell the nurse to give her more—anything to keep the horrible pain away.

Suddenly it went off, and she lay in a beautiful clearness, with a *resting* feeling as of one who had been greatly wearied. She noted again the strangeness of the room and, "Where is Lou?" she asked in a rational voice.

The nurse came back to the bed.

"Lou?" she questioned.

"My sister. Is she worse? She's been sick. I came to spend the night with her before I went away."

"This is the hospital," Miss Lane explained. "We are trying to make you comfortable. It was a bad accident. I'm so glad you are conscious now, and can tell us your name so we can let your family know."

The lonely face on the pillow looked up at the nurse, studying her face—its freshness, its youth, its gentle pity. Then she spoke quietly:

"I'm going to die?"

The toneless little phrase dropped on the nurse's quiescent stillness.

"Well . . ." Mrs. Adams let it go.

"And you'll tell me your name?" the nurse went back.

Mrs. Adams said nothing. She stared at the blankness of the wall opposite and thought she remembered everything now: The banquet, the speeches, the cab. Ah! if she had only waited! And her husband—he was so tired! How dreadful for such a thing to happen now—just as he was sailing, with his plans all made! He had arranged so many details, and this, of course, would delay him. She could think about it in a detached way, quite as if she were outside the question, uninvolved except in her interest for his comfort.

To have brought all this upon him! And for her to be the one, when she had wanted to spare him every

drawback, every incubus. If she had only waited. "Penny wise, pound foolish." Well . . .

"You'll tell me your name—who to send for?" the nurse asked again.

"In the morning." Mrs. Adams lifted her hand in protest. "I don't want anybody should be disturbed. My husband needs rest; he's been right nervous."

"But—in the morning—" the nurse suggested.

"Won't I—live till morning?"

"It's so hard to know. You are seriously hurt."

"How long do you think—?"

"I'm afraid—" the nurse hesitated.

"If you want to see your family—your husband?—he ought to be sent for—soon."

"Well—I don't want to send for him right yet. Wait a little. You won't let the pain come back?"

"I'll do my best." The nurse met the pathos with the acceptance of one who was used to such tragic scenes.

"I just want to wait a while," the dying woman explained. "I don't want to rouse him up now; I want to just think about things."

It seemed a queer touch to the nurse—a dying woman with a husband, who did not wish her last hours to be comforted with his presence. It was incomprehensible. Her face was oddly incomprehensible, too.

It was a type of face the nurse had often seen—the face, for all her wedding-ring, of a spinster school-teacher, used to routine, set in a groove impossible to escape.

The nurse had little imagination; she could class the type, but there were lines in Mrs. Adams's face beyond her power to interpret—lines of rebellion, of patience, of effort, of devotion; a web that was a tragic mask to a discerning, divining eye for the aged and commonplace face.

Mrs. Adams, in her quiet freedom from pain, lay "thinking about things" in a detached way that seemed quite natural; a sort of small nautical adventure in which she circled in a boat she managed with wonderful

case about a water-logged, motionless vessel she recognized as herself. It was an old vessel—quite unseaworthy—a sailing boat! There wasn't an engine! No wonder it couldn't get on. She floated off, off . . .

She came back to herself in a dreadful rush of pain. Again came the sharp prick in her arm, and then the slow retreat into ease. The nurse gave her brandy and again asked her for her name.

"It is necessary—very necessary. Think how your husband would feel if—"

"Well—don't send for him until daylight. Promise me you won't. He can get here real quick. I don't want he should feel bad longer than can be helped."

In the face of this the nurse was speechless; she promised and wrote the name and address with the mental reservation that she would send it to the night nurse to call up over the telephone during the next spell of unconsciousness. She saw the patient was going faster than they had thought.

Mrs. Adams remembered things.

She looked back over the unlovely hardness of her early life. Poverty had been only one of her troubles; it was the encompassing atmosphere, accepted without revolt and scarcely reckoned with as a factor that could be removed, of so many stings and disappointments. The thing she had wanted most in those early days of a remote New England youth had been education. She had worked for it, fighting against every adverse circumstance in her long struggle toward the goal of her utmost desires, a school of her own.

She was twenty-six when she got it; a pale, thin, awkward girl who had never known girlhood, with serious blue eyes that had looked defeat and humiliation in the face daily, until she had carried her point.

She had left her own environment for the first time when she went to take her first school. Her younger sister, who lived with her, was left

in the temporary and grudging care of an aunt, and she went South, where everything was new and strange, to take charge of her duties.

Her knowledge was very meager, but she was exceedingly conscientious and she did well. People in the little country neighborhood were not hard to please. They liked her, and after the first bitter homesickness wore off she was content. By rigid economy she sent money back to educate her sister. She wanted her to study the things she hadn't been able to herself—music and Latin and French—things that were always more or less a shibboleth to her. Perhaps if they hadn't been . . .

When she was twenty-nine life took on a newer, brighter sweetness; her face freshened to a second attempt at youth. She remembered when she had begun for the first time to question her mirror and to care what it answered. She had an admirer for the first time in her life in Robert Adams. He was a young lawyer—very poor, very ambitious, and altogether self-made, but even then at twenty-three giving in his obscure environment a promise everyone recognized.

It was simple—and yet so wonderful—how it came about! Propinquity, the only young people for miles—these were the prime forces, and, perhaps also, the interest she showed in his interests.

So they had married. She had truthfully told him the hard fact of the difference of their ages, but he had pushed it aside. Ten years of married life—she could recall nothing to mar those ten years in their little country village. Even the baby's death, and the sorrow that they had never had another child, had been unable to change the face of the early happiness.

Their life had been hard at first, but it had meant things then in the early days that success and honor and wealth had lessened.

The early sweetness of knowing what he was doing, and how and why—of entering into his plans and helping him forecast his future—had

been changed as his interests had broadened and deepened to the rush of a passage that had left her little craft far behind. He had weathered tempests, made headway in dead calms, and in her hampered progress in his wake she felt the glamour of the conquests he made, the place he achieved—which she couldn't ever honor.

That was the sting! He had kept pace with his achievement—always, if anything, a little ahead. But she—! Ah, she had always known how hopeless her personality was—as hopeless as her face! It was her hopeless lack of the things other women—with whom she began to be thrown in relation—possessed as a birthright that pricked deepest. If she could have met them on equal ground—or had, at least, been armed with a single weapon for the fight . . .

Often she had seen women in like case to herself—untrained, ungifted, with no *savoir faire*; aliens in a world they had come to be a part of through the evolution of politics. But they—or so many of them!—triumphed. She had watched it daily. They had had what she couldn't have—facility and imitiveness; and besides, so frequently, personal traits and attractions that had advanced not themselves alone, but their husbands as well.

Mrs. Adams remembered how often she had felt it was because these other women were younger than their husbands. Their youth, as well as their good looks, had helped them to adjust themselves to the quick changes of their husbands' fortunes. Only she . . .

The long-drawn-out tragedy of her failures—her hopeless effort to keep up! How she had struggled!

The effort to dress correctly, to be like other women! She remembered the beautiful hats and gowns which she had forced herself to wear until the sense of the travesty their dainty elegance made in conjunction with her timid, provincial, tired face had become too strong. Fine feathers might per-

haps make fine birds, but in her case it had been pitiful—a burlesque of youth.

She had made her pathetic effort to enter into the complexities of modern life, but it had been impossible; she had always remained an outsider. By some atavism she might have been a Puritan of the early pioneer days—strong and willing and loving, but unable outside these simple characteristics to enter into a life for which she had neither the training nor the inclination.

She had tried—oh, she had tried! She recalled endless details: the French maid, the marvelous corsets that were to "create" her figure, the rouge—she hadn't even shuddered from it! Every sacrifice—and they had been of the spirit as well as the letter—had been so willingly laid on her husband's altar.

He had never perhaps guessed how she had tried, though she knew he must have known how she had failed. Through it all he had been so kind. Kind? Why did she hate it so, the fact that he had been kind? Was it because kindness implied the knowledge of her woeful lack in so many ways?

She felt very still and peaceful. A clock outside in the hall was racing so fast. . . . Nobody ever caught up. It wasn't any use to try.

A doctor came in. She heard the nurse tell him they had sent for her husband. She hated it so, that they should disturb him. She had never before been a hindrance; at least she had been able—so joyfully able to do that poor service! to smooth his way of minor cares and bothers. To think that she should be the one to trouble him at this supreme point in his career! What beautiful tributes she had listened to a few hours ago so proudly! Each one had given his warmest quota to the general eulogy; the fullest benison to make, as one speaker had proclaimed, "a stirrup-cup for a gallant leader who had never turned his back, but marched breast forward."

And now, she, who couldn't add to

the pleasure of the draught they offered him, was the one to spill it on the ground!

She closed her eyes; she seemed to feel no pain now—only a numbness, a lethargy. She was sinking back far into its peace, but some thought held her—she couldn't get it clear. It was there, though. . . .

It came suddenly out of the dimness, bright as a vision of the Grail—strong as a prophecy; throwing the last light on her pathetic problem. The vision was of her husband—free of all incubus; eager and young in flesh and spirit and ready for the splendid gallop to his goal.

It was she—the knowledge was like a ray of light—who if she had once dispiritingly weighted his advance, could now give him the final, needed gift. It brought a thrill even in this last hour. A beautiful exaltation, a reverent thankfulness for this happiness of ministering by her death to the man she had loved so well through her life, gave her face a wonderful softness—a sweetness as of girlhood.

She slipped back, happy with her divination, into the final unconsciousness. The nurse told Adams a little later that she was sure she was very happy when she died.



OUR LADY'S GARDEN

By Archibald Sullivan

LILIES are chapels fair, whiter than snow;
Up to their altars the butterflies go—
Hark, then, confessionals whispered and low.

The rose-bush's convent has emeralds, for stairs,
The Little Red Sisters are all at their prayers;
Starlight will kiss their cheeks unawares.

Lilacs are vesper-bells, purple and white,
Swung by the nightingale's song of delight,
Calling the faithful ones out of the night.

Stars are the choristers, silver and blue,
Cassocked in ebony, surpliced in dew,
From night's dark vestry wandered through.

Hear the moon chanting behind the night's screen;
Golden her voice in the cypress-trees green—
"All hail to Mary—Mary the Queen."



HUZZA!

"DID Miss Spinster marry happily?"
"Yes, she married, happily."

THE GUILTY MAN

By Temple Bailey

ALL the cares of a crowded week dropped from Mark Blair's shoulders as the lady of his heart came down the rose-bordered path to meet him.

"Your train was late," she said; "I have been waiting and waiting——"

He bent over her hand, but he did not kiss her, because of the man with his bag and the man with the lawn-mower, and Marion's father and mother, who were smiling at him from the doorway; but after dinner when the lawn-mower was still, and the man with the bag was unpacking Blair's things in the west room, and Marion's father and mother had gone in to escape the night air, and they were alone on the porch in the fragrant darkness, he made up for the omission of the afternoon.

"It is such a different world out here," he said, leaning back in his chair. "In town it is all bang and bustle and glare and problems, but when it gets very bad I think of the coolness and the moonlight—and you, and it rests me a lot."

She reached out her hand to him and silence fell between them. After a while Mark said: "I've had an awful week, Marion, but I'm going to get him off."

She leaned forward eagerly. "Levine?"

"Yes. They can't produce any evidence that I can't meet. It's a great case, Marion. If I win it, my reputation is established."

She smiled at him, inattentively; then looked across the sleeping garden to where the jagged line of the dark hills cut into the silver sky.

He watched her with jealous eyes. "What are you thinking of?" he demanded. "I don't believe you care whether I win a reputation or not——"

"Oh, yes, I do." She laughed a little, and came and stood behind his chair, touching his crisp curls with her slender fingers.

Thrilled by her caress he sat very still. Even after their six months' engagement he could not accept her affection as a matter of course. There had been so many years of unloved boyhood; so many fighting years when every hand had seemed raised against him. Like most self-made men he was not humble, rating his worth by the things he had attained; but when he thought of her beauty, of her graciousness, of her infinite condescension in linking her future with his, his soul knelt at her feet.

"Oh, yes, I do," she repeated. "I do want you to be the greatest criminal lawyer of our time. But I was thinking of the man. How glad he will be!"

Blair stirred restlessly. "He's a cowardly little creature, Marion. But I'm sorry for him. I shouldn't like to see him hanged."

"Of course not. It isn't as if he were guilty."

"Guilty!" He echoed the word; then shifted his position so that he could look up into her face. "Suppose he were, Marion? You wouldn't want him to be hanged?"

"Oh, no"—she shivered a little—"oh, no. But then, you wouldn't be defending him if he were guilty, Mark."

"Why not?" sharply.
"It wouldn't be right."

"Every man has a right to get off if he can."

"Oh, but not to get off just because his lawyer is shrewd enough to hoodwink a jury and to suppress evidence. I haven't much use for that kind of lawyer, Mark."

He laughed a trifle awkwardly. "Oh, well, that is the way reputations are made nowadays. The man of ideals fails where the man of ingenuity wins."

"Oh," she said impetuously, "I don't like that view of it; I don't like to hear you say such things, Mark."

As she stood there in the moonlight with that troubled look on her face, he found himself wishing that his soul might be bared before her. It seemed to him that he would like to stand face to face with her sharpest judgment, to see himself by the light of her unsullied conscience.

He stood up, breathing quickly. "Levine is guilty," was his bald statement.

"Mark!"

"Yes."

"And you are defending him?" Her voice was very low, her hand was on her heart.

"What else could I do? He begged me to take the case, and then I got the truth out of him. There isn't a shadow of doubt in my mind about his guilt. But I am going to get him off." His tone was slightly defiant.

"And defeat the ends of justice?"

It was not pleasant to note the scorn in her voice. He took a quick step toward her, but she drew back. The action stabbed him. He had valued infinitely the few precious privileges she had granted him, and never before had he been repulsed.

Not an arm's reach apart, but divided immeasurably by his confession, they stood there in the moonlight. Blair was the first to break the heavy silence.

"I need not have told you," he said. "It is, after all, a thing that a man has no right to tell—even to his wife. But our love is the one perfect thing in my imperfect life; Marion, between you

and me there shall be no barrier of deceit. You have a right to know me as I am."

As their eyes met, deep looked into deep.

"I did not think you would compromise with conscience," she faltered, then came to him, sobbing, "Oh, Mark, Mark!"

After a while she whispered tremulously, "I'm glad you told me," but when he tried to marshal his arguments she grew very pale and held up her hand. "Don't, don't! It is all wrong somewhere," and then he knew that though he had held her by the force of his love, he had fallen from his high estate.

That night he could not sleep. He thought of his pinched childhood; of his boyish dreams of great deeds and gentle achievements; of his early entrance into the world of greed and sordidness; of the immediate revelation that money was the ruling power, and that honor in business was a thing to be relegated to a romantic past; of his gradual acceptance of selfish standards; of the burial of his ideals.

And then he had met Marion and had found her the embodiment of all that he had lost. He had loved her and had been loved in return, and it had been a new earth and a new heaven.

As the night waned he got up and dressed and went out into the garden. The east was rosy with the dawn and the air held the fragrance of the Springtime. He drew long, deep breaths. He felt within him the resurrection of the high thoughts of boyhood. Thank God, the past had belonged to him, alone. The future should be Marion's.

Later in the week, amid the dry-as-dust surroundings of his office, he had to admit that his action looked quixotic. Row after row of calf-bound books stared him in the face and challenged him to view the case in its legal aspect. He went over and stood by the window. Beyond the skyscrapers, beyond the flaring signs and grimy chimneys, he caught the flash of the shining river. Today it seemed to

take on an allegorical significance. Beyond the sordidness of everyday experience there were waters wide and deep and clear on which he and Marion would sail to the land of the ideal.

Marion! He must write and tell her that he had given up the case.

And, even as he thought of her, she came. It was the first time that she had visited his office, and it seemed to fit into his mood that she should come now all in white, with a rose in her belt. He would show her the shining river and tell her. . . . But as she raised her veil he saw that she had been crying.

"What is it?" he asked solicitously.

She was so shaken that she could not speak at once, but after a moment she said, shuddering, "I've seen Levine's mother."

He stared at her, not comprehending.

"She came to me—she said that you were going to give up the case, that she had heard that I was going to marry you. She begged me to use my influence. She said they would hang him. She said that he was innocent—she begged me on her knees—it was awful—?"

"It is infamous to drag you into it," he said angrily.

"Oh, no!" she protested. "She is his mother, and she loves him." She reached out her hands to him. "You must save him, Mark, you must, you must—"

He took her hands and stood looking down at her. For a moment he lost the clearness of his spiritual vision.

"You said it was wrong," he began, but she stopped him, nervously.

"Oh, I know I did. I don't know now whether it is right to defend him. But I can't let him be hanged. I should see him in my dreams. I should feel like a murderer. And then, his mother! Oh, Mark!" She was sobbing uncontrollably, with her face hidden in her hands.

"Hush!" he cried, and stood looking down at her.

"Let us be reasonable," he said at last, and drew out a big leather-covered chair and put her into it.

But she would not be reasonable; there was only one course, and he must take it. She would never be happy if he did not.

After a while she reproached him. "I am asking you to do it for my sake."

"But it was a brutal murder. His wife, poor little soul, was as innocent as a baby. What right have I to defame her memory in order to get him off? Most of my cases are like a game. I must make certain moves to defeat my opponent, and when I checkmate I forget all about the moral aspect. But the other night you made me think, Marion."

She twisted her slender fingers together, nervously. "Surely he will be a better man after this—he has had such a lesson."

Blair knew that Levine would not be a better man. He would be forever a menace to society with his bestial instincts, his degenerate impulses. But Marion could not know that. She had lived her white life in a country garden among the roses!

He smiled at her the illumined smile that he seemed always to reserve for her.

"You must think me awfully inconsistent," she faltered.

"It is because your sympathy is stronger than your sense of justice. It is because you are a loving woman, Marion."

"And you will, Mark?"

"I cannot tell you yet."

That afternoon he went to see Levine. He wanted to be sure that he was making no mistake. The desperate, white-faced criminal groveled at his feet. "You've got to! You've got to get me off!" he whimpered.

Looking at him, Blair felt a little sick. That human nature should have in it so much of the beast! After all, why shouldn't Levine be killed? One killed a jackal or a hyena without compunction. Why not this thing on the floor?

"You're going back on me," Levine flung out, as he saw no sign of softening on the lawyer's face. "You've gone back on me, and I call it a dirty trick."

"Get up," Blair said shortly. Then, as the criminal got on his feet and dropped, shaking, on the bench, he had a sudden revulsion of feeling. "Poor fellow!" he said.

Levine looked up with a gleam of hope. "You're going to get me off?" he asked.

"No."

"Damn you!" the murderer said between set teeth; with his fingers kneading his knees tensely, he went on: "I won't let them hang me. I'll kill myself."

"I'm not the only lawyer in the world, Levine. Of course it will go out to the world that you have dismissed me. And someone else will help you out."

"They can't get me off, and you know it. You're the slickest one of the lot, and that's what's the matter with you. If I had a million you'd be sweating night and day to keep me from the gallows."

Out of the mouth of this mean man had come Blair's arraignment. He was "the slickest one of the lot."

That was what the world said of him. That was the pinnacle he had reached after years of climbing!

Six months later Levine was condemned to be "hanged by the neck until dead." Blair, with the vision of the shivering wretch haunting him, went that evening to Marion. The wind was moaning among the dead leaves of the garden, and as he reached the porch the rain came down in a cold drizzle.

He found Levine's mother with Marion in the dim old parlor. The old woman was weeping, amid a torrent of words. "He has murdered my son," Blair heard her say. "Don't marry him, miss, don't, don't—"

"Hush!" Marion said. "He thinks he is doing what is right." But her tone wavered.

Blair stepped across the room and confronted them.

"Go home," he said to the old woman steadily, though his eyes were

stormy; "go home and pray for your son."

But she cursed him with her shaking hands beating the air, until at last Marion shrank away. "Please, please," she said faintly, and this time Blair's command allowed no refusal, and the witch-like creature left them.

"Poor thing, oh, poor thing!" Marion said, and watched her from the window, as she went away in the wind and rain; but Blair flung out: "Levine would not have been where he is today if it had not been for her. All that he is she has made him. She is a bad old woman, Marion."

"But she is his mother——"

"Yes, yes," he agreed, and stood leaning against the mantel, his eyes fixed somberly on the flickering fire.

Marion sat in the shadows on the opposite side of the fireplace. The pale tints of her gown melted into the grayness of the twilight.

"You still blame me?" Blair questioned heavily.

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know. It's the awfulness of it." She reached out her hand to touch the bell. "Don't let us talk of it. We will have some tea and the lights. I can see horrors in the dark."

He interposed quickly: "I don't want lights, Marion. I want to talk to you now. To have it out."

The weariness of his voice, the despondent droop of his figure, seemed to come upon her with something of a shock.

"Mark—what is the matter?"

"Everything." He looked down at her, and his face softened. "This thing has come between us, Marion."

"Oh, no, no!" she protested.

"But I know that it has," he insisted, with a kind of quiet despair. "Since I refused to represent Levine you have shut me out of your inner life. You have tried to act the same, but you haven't felt the same. You think me hard—unfeeling, and I can't stand it any longer, Marion."

He brought the words out with a force that startled her.

"I knew if Levine were guilty you

would feel that I might have saved him, and yet if I had saved him, it would have been the beginning of my eternal degradation, Marion."

"But why?"

"Because before that night, when you brought me face to face with myself, I had been unconsciously going down. I had been winning notoriety and calling it fame, and I hadn't stopped to think whether I was doing it honestly or dishonestly. But that night——"

He stopped as the memory of it surged over him.

"That night," he went on presently, with a break in his voice, "I saw myself as you wanted me to be—as I ought to be—as I might be, by the grace of God, Marion."

She sat motionless, but the laces of her gown rose and fell as her breath came quickly.

"And then you were swayed to an opposite view by your sympathy for the man, and for a time I hesitated. I don't know that I want you to understand how I fought the world before I met you—it isn't a pleasant story—but I did want you to hold out your hand to me and help me. I wanted you to lead me, and you would not."

The silence that fell between them was on her part the silence of stricken revelation.

"And so I have had to decide it alone. I have lost money, I have lost business, because it would again soil my hands. I have stood the jeers of my colleagues. I have stood your withdrawal."

Her hand went out toward him, but he continued, unheeding:

"And that is not all. I have known that I could save a man from death, and I have not done it because at last I know that there must be law in the world, and that there must be justice; that the wicked must suffer for the good of the race, and that the man who, for his own ends, defeats the ends of law and justice and order or who stands before a jury and pleads a lie is a guilty man—as guilty as the murderer who stands in the dock."

His head was up and he seemed to throw down the gauntlet to the world. Faintly it came to her that he had climbed above her and had reached the heights alone.

"That morning in the garden," he went on, more quietly, "I said that my future should be yours; afterwards, in my office, I looked out on the shining river and said it again; but now I know that what I do I must do, not because of you, but because it is right for me to do it—and if you cannot understand, why, then, why, then——"

His voice died away into silence.

Outside, the wind moaned and shrieked. The clamor seemed to intensify the stillness of the room. Blair broke it sharply.

"Well," he said, "if Levine hangs, what then?"

"Don't," she said intensely, "don't let us think of him—now."

And as she lifted her face to him, softened by a new humility, his heart leaped with the knowledge that the barrier was down, and that between them henceforth there could be no shadow of misunderstanding.



NATURAL INQUIRY

MRS. GRAMERCY—Mrs. Newrich turned up her nose when I passed her today in my auto.

MRS. PARK—Did it smell as bad as all that, dear?

A SUPREME TEST

By Harold Eyre

"WHAT is the matter, dear?" said the girl; "you seem depressed."

"I am sad," replied the young man, "because although I love you as few men have ever loved a woman, and although I have told you so, there is nothing I can do to prove it; you have to take my word for the matter. That is the worst of this degenerate age."

"In the good old times, a few hundred years ago, there were a score of ways in which a man could show his devotion. He could challenge his enemies to mortal combat and vanquish them by his strength and courage and his skill with arms; he could enlist in the Wars of the Crusades and perform prodigies of valor to win renown for himself and the woman he loved; or he could go forth on a toilsome pilgrimage to some distant shrine, crawling on hands and knees over stony roads as a token of gratitude to the powers above for his felicity in having won her. In fact, there were any number of things he could do to show the strength of his passion."

"But nowadays, in these prosaic, matter-of-fact times, he is restricted to foolish offerings of books and flowers and candy—and if she accepts him, an engagement ring! Ah, what a change in the spirit of things! It is humiliating to think that, loving you as I do, better than anything else in the world, there is nothing, nothing that I can do to prove it, to make you realize beyond all question how much

you mean to me. If you would only put me to the test, set me some difficult task, demand some great sacrifice—life itself, if need be, though of course I would rather live to be happy with you; indeed, life has seemed a thousand times sweeter since you told me, that wonderful, never-to-be-forgotten night, that you cared for me. Why, I would go to the uttermost ends of the earth, banish myself from civilization, expose myself to the gravest dangers, endure with cheerfulness every conceivable hardship, to satisfy your lightest whim."

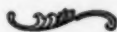
"Dearest," said the girl, slowly and somewhat timidly, "I believe in you implicitly—how could I doubt you for a moment after all that you have said?—and I need no test to convince me of your love. But there is one thing I should like to ask. I have had it in mind for a long time, but did not like to suggest it; I was afraid you might not like it, might think it a sacrifice I had no right to expect you to make."

The young man laughed indulgently. "Foolish child, how little you know me! Name this sacrifice, and you will see——"

"It's just this: I should like you to cut off your mustache. I'm sure you would look much better without one, and I adore clean-shaven men."

He looked at her in pained surprise. His face hardened.

"I am sorry," he said coldly, "but you have asked the one thing that I cannot do!"



PROSERPINE

By Edward Wilbur Mason

WHO said that you had passed into the night
Of uncouth earth, O daughter of the gods?
Lo! now from out your prison of the clods
You burst with smile of rapture and of light!
The shadow of your beauty warm and bright,
Mantles with verdant grass the plain and hills;
You kindle with your touch the daffodils;
Before your footstep Winter flees in fright!

Yet all so artlessly you laugh and sing,
Veiling with azure violets your eyes—
So full your soul of shadow and of shine,
Men call you April, lovely child of Spring;
But lo! beneath your beauty's bright disguise,
The poet knows you—queenly Proserpine!



HOW TO BE IRRITABLE

IT is difficult to be continuously and judiciously irritable by means of a big thing, because it is apt to be with us so long as to become a matter of habit, and before we know it we are in a rut of placidity.

It is the little things that annoy us most, and by courting them we can manage to keep as irritable as is good for us.

Some people may declare that it isn't well to be irritable at any time, but this is because they know no better. We never saw a person yet who amounted to anything who didn't know how to be irritable.

One of the reasons of this is that the person who doesn't know how is never sure of being alone. Unless we can summon a certain amount of irritability to our aid on call we are likely to be bored to death.

But when a person is known to be subject to irritability a certain amount of caution is required to approach him. This gives him a big advantage. If he amounts to anything at all—and he wouldn't be irritable if he didn't—he is worth cultivating, but he is going to be left alone by those who don't give him something in return.

Therefore, be irritable—not too irritable, but sufficiently so for useful purposes. To do this, be annoyed as many times a day as you think necessary, in order to keep yourself in good practice.

A man who is naturally irritable by design should be thankful that he is alive, if for no other reason than to demonstrate that it pays.

TOM MASSON.